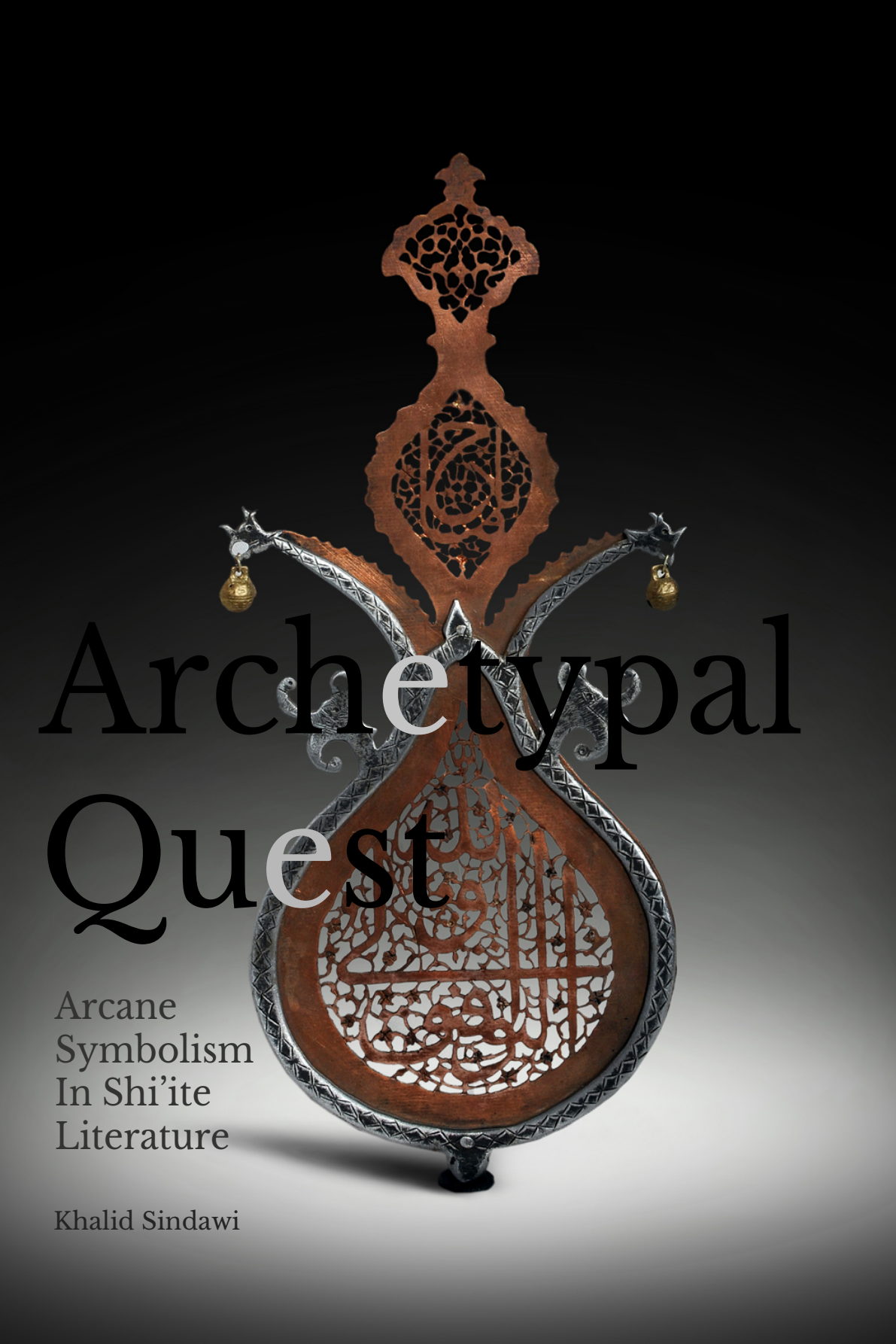

Archetypal Quest

Arcane Symbolism In Shi'ite Literature

Khalid Sindawi

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Arcane Symbolism In Shi'ite Literature

by

Khalid Sindawi

compiled

archegos aejazel

The material collected in this volume comprises of articles on Shi'ism authored by Khalid Sindawi that has appeared in various publications over the years. In order to avoid confusion the original pagination has been maintained to make referencing easier.

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COSMIC CHAOS

KHALID SINDAWI

THE IMAGE OF ḤUSAYN IBN 'ALĪ IN *MAQĀTIL* LITERATURE[1]

I. *Introduction*

This research concerns the image of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī as reflected in the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*. Ḥusayn's dramatic death inspired many Shī'ite poets, and from the second century of the Hijra (8th century AD), historians began to compose works describing this event. These works were known as *maqātil* (plural of *maqtal*). Their composition developed mainly from the 8th until the 13th century, but it continues to the present day. The period of the research spans 500 years and is based mainly on four independent *maqātil* selected as characteristic: a) *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* by Abū Mikhnaf (Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, d. 774/157); b) *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* by Akhṭab Khawārizm (d. 1172/568); c) *Muthīr al-aḥzān wa munīr al-ashjān* by Ja'far Ibn Namā (d. 1247/645); d) *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-ṭufūf* by 'Alī ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 1266/664).

The term "*maqtal*" conveys four main senses: 1) *maqtal* as in *qatala*, the act of killing; 2) the reason for the killing; 3) a central organ in the body that is injured and results in death; 4) a description of the time and place of the killing.

Because Ḥusayn is a major personality, most *maqātil* center on his character. He is gifted with exceptional traits, in consequence of his descent from the Prophet and his role as an Imām continuing in his path. Authors of *maqātil* frequently refer to these traits and stress his similarity to his father, the Imām 'Alī, and to his grandfather, the Prophet Muḥammad. Ḥusayn is represented in the *maqātil* as steadfast in his faith and obedient to commandment of prayer at the appointed times. He also performs supernatural acts of courage and works miracles and wonders.

The authors of the *maqātil* develop a connection between Ḥusayn and Jesus, and also Ḥusayn and John the Baptist, in order to bestow holy attributes upon Ḥusayn. The research also examines motifs such as the dream, the prophets, devils and

[1] This article is part of my thesis for a Ph.D. degree on the subject of the *maqātil* in Shī'ite literature.The thesis was submitted in March 2000 at Bar-Ilan University, under the supervision of Dr.Yeshayahu Goldfeld, from Bar-Ilan University, and. Prof. George Kanazi, from Haifa University. I am deeply grateful for their guidance.

QSA, 20-21 (2002-2003), pp. 79-104

angels, Jews and Christians, the weeping of nature over the death of Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn's thirst, his decapitated head, and the premonition of his death.

II. *Ḥusayn's birth*

II. 1. *General background: The shaping of a saint's image*

Before considering the particular characteristics of Ḥusayn, we would like to elaborate on the way images of saints are shaped in the culture of peoples, as they appear in hagiography.[2] Hagiography played a vital role in medieval cultural and intellectual life. To some extent our literature is rooted in hagiography, which still exists today in popular literature. This literature has specific features, such as the following:

Time and place are not defined. The reported event takes place in a wide geographical framework; the story is universal and could have happened at any time and place. Importance is only ascribed to the place of the saint's death or to the location of his relics. As to time, only the divine is taken into consideration, not the human.

On the other hand, the saint's image is a prototype with uniform traits. The monk, the virgin, the bishop and the imam all belong to the same category. They represent identical virtues and their personalities remain unobtrusive. Everything we know about them is symbolic and significant. Hagiographers shape and embellish their heroes and impart to them superior qualities. The saint is supposed to represent the perfection of human virtue: he is at once thinker, leader, healer, messenger, and martyr. The biography of a saint presents the following characteristics:

a) origin – from a noble or a revered family;
b) birth – generally associated with miracles or prophecies;
c) traits – already as a child the saint reveals several outstanding virtues, such as charity, moral authority, courage, heroism, and great wisdom;
d) an exceptional event: sometimes death followed by resurrection;
e) self-sacrifice and martyrdom;
f) relics of the saint or his body play an important role with his believers;
g) the saint works miracles, during his lifetime and after his death.

Not all these components are always present, but the scheme is constant. Different saints will perform the same actions in similar circumstances. The miracles are also identical. However, the situation is dynamic: the person finds himself torn between heaven and hell, between the world of the living and the world of the dead, the seen and the unseen. The saint perpetually struggles with himself and others, with the devil. Though the text is known in advance (mission, choice, moral lesson), there is no development but only revelation. By this victory over his

[2] See R. Boyer, "An attempt to define the typology of Medieval Hagiography", in *Hagiography & Medieval Literature – a Symposium,* Odensee U.P., 1981, pp. 27-35.

hardships, the saint reveals God's glory. We shall now examine the characteristics of Ḥusayn's birth according to the above scheme.

II.2. *Ḥusayn's birth – its miraculous characteristics*

Ḥusayn was born on the fifth day of the month Sha'bān, in the fourth year of the Hijra - 625 AD.[3] According to other versions, he was born on the third or fourth day of the said month.[4] The life of Ḥusayn, as narrated in *Maqātil* literature, differs from that of ordinary mortals because he was a hereditary imam, gifted with supernatural forces and wonderful traits. His birth is also different and miraculous and is foretold by special signs. *Maqātil* literature venerates Ḥusayn and in several contexts emphasizes his descent from a noble and revered family. It reports the different stages of his life story from birth to death, creating a whole cycle of tales which shape the hero's image.[5]

It is told that he was born on the end of the sixth month of the pregnancy of his mother Fāṭima al-Zahrā', on the day of 'Āshūrā' (like Jesus Christ and John the Baptist),[6] and he was killed 57 years later on the very same day,[7] i.e. on the tenth day of Muḥarram, in the year 61 of the Hijra (10 Oct. 680 AD). The day of 'Āshūrā' is therefore sacred to the Shī'ites.[8] Ḥusayn's birth was blessed by the angels. One of the traditions says that the angel Gabriel appeared with a thousand other angels from Heaven before the Prophet Muḥammad, to congratulate him on the birth of his grandson Ḥusayn.[9]

In other parts of the *maqātil* there is mention of dreams that brought the tidings of Ḥusayn's birth before it happened. For example, Umm al-Faḍl tells of a dream of Lūbāba bint al-Ḥārith predicting the impending birth of Ḥusayn.[10] Furthermore, it is

3 Raḍī al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-ṭufūf,* Najaf: al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1950, p. 9.

4 Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn Hibat Allāh al-Shāfi'ī, known as Ibn 'Asākir al-imām al-Ḥusayn , *Min tārikh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī, Qum: Majma' al-thaqāfa al-islāmiyya, 1414/1994², p. 38. See also al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, p. 198.

5 Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ja'far Hibat al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (Ibn Namā), *Muthīr al-aḥzān wa-munīr subul al-ashjān*, Tehran, 1317/1899, p. 5.

6 On the similarity between Ḥusayn and John, see Kh. Sindawi, *The Maqātil in Shī'ite Literature* (Hebrew), Ph.D. thesis, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2000, pp. 122-123.

7 In 'Alī Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Lahūf,* p. 9, it is said that Ḥusayn was born on the third day of the month Sha'bān, in the year 4 of the Hijra/626 A.D. According to another tradition, reported by Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ḥusayn was born on the third day of Ramaḍān. A third tradition speaks about Ḥusayn being born on the fourth day of Elul, in the year 3 of the Hijra.

8 On the day of 'Āshūrā' and its holiness, see Aviva Schussman, *Stories of the Prophets in Muslim Tradition* (Hebrew), Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1981, p. 156.

9 Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, p. 10.

10 See Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, ch. IV, Motif of Dream, pp. 153-167.

said that Ḥusayn's mother, Fāṭima – Muḥammad's daughter–, was a virgin when she gave birth to him, just like Jesus' mother, Maryam.[11] Fāṭima is much glorified in Muslim literature and is even called "The Lady of all Women, in this world and in the next one". She is said to have been superior to all women by her virtues, her piety, and her distinction,and to have devoted her life to God.[12] Ḥusayn's birth was thus miraculous, a real saint's birth, from a virgin mother and preceded by special signs. Other traits of Ḥusayn, as represented in *maqātil* literature, also accord with the saint's image.

Ḥusayn displays remarkable traits; he is gifted with moral authority, courage, and heroism. He sacrifices his life and dies a martyr's death; his relics are sacred and very important to Shī'ite believers; and finally, Ḥusayn works miracles during his lifetime and also after his death, by means of his decapitated head. The head can speak and it influences the events that occur after the slaying.[13]

Ḥusayn's death too is exceptional. He was killed on the day of 'Āshūrā', the tenth day of Muḥarram, and we have seen that some of the traditions also assign his birth to the same day, as opposed to the historical data. According to Shī'ite authors, it is not by accident that he was killed on that given day. We mention here a few of the tributes of praise that Shī'ite literature attaches to the day of 'Āshūrā'.

The day of 'Āshūrā' witnessed very important events. On that day, God created the and also the Royal Throne and the stars; on that day, man was created; it is also the day when our Father, Abraham, was born; Jesus was likewise born on the day of 'Āshūrā' and rose to Heaven on that same day. The Prophet Muḥammad was allegedly also born on the day of 'Āshūrā'; but this statement is historicaly incorrect, as Muḥammad was in fact born on the twelfth day of the month Rabī' al-awwal.

Other historical events related to the day of 'Āshūrā' are the following: on that day, Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat (al-Jūdī); and it was the day when God parted the sea before Moses, and the Hebrews were able to cross it; on that day, Jonas was vomited from the whale's maw; and it will also be the date of Doomsday and of the resurrection of the dead.[14]

[11] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 3.

[12] al-Sayyid Murtaḍā al-Ḥusayn ī al-Fayrūzabadī, *Faḍā'il al-khamsa min al-ṣihāḥ al-sitta*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī, 1402/1982[4], V, p. 156.

[13] See Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, ch. IV, Motif of the decapitated head, pp. 215-24.

[14] Al-Muwaffaq ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Bakrī al-Makkī al-Ḥanafī (Akhṭab Khawārizm), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* , Najaf: Maṭba'at al-Zahrā', 1367/1948, pp. 3-4; Kh. Sindawi, " 'Āshūrā' Day and Yom Kippur", *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, 38 (2001), pp. 200-214.

If we examine all the events supposed to have happened on the day of 'Āshūrā', even if this is not historically correct, we observe that most of them are related to prophets or messengers of God and connected with salvation from distress. The birth and the death of Ḥusayn both coincide with a day when important events took place. The Shī'ites thereby emphasize the fact that Ḥusayn holds a very honorable rank, similar to that of the prophets and the saints before him, and that he was able to perform miracles and to save people from distress, just as his forebears did.

All these characteristics, including Ḥusayn's venerable origin and the story of his miraculous birth are aimed at the shaping of his image, not only as a warrior and a hero but also as a holy man.

III. *The image of Ḥusayn: outward appearance*

III.1. *The face and the beard*

Ḥusayn's outward appearance mostly serves as a first sign of recognition, although the authors of *maqātil* use only a small number of particulars in their exterior description, and these particulars occupy but little space. Authors of *maqātil* chose to concentrate upon two of Ḥusayn's face and of his beard. These two descriptions repeatedly appear in *Maqātil* literature in various connections and are dominant features of the outward appearance, with hardly any other exterior signs of recognition.

a) *Ḥusayn's face shines with light and no other can be compared to it*

In the *maqtal* of Ibn Namā we find Hilāl Ibn Nāfi' saying: "the radiant and comely Ḥusayn"[15] A similar tradition is quoted as having been pronounced by Khawlī al-'Aṣbaḥī, in the *maqtal* of Ṭāwūs.[16] Another tradition related to Ḥusayn's face appears in the Ibn Ṭāwūs *maqtal*, as spoken by Hilāl ibn Nāfi', from the Umayyad army. Hilāl said: "I never saw a fairer face than that of Ḥusayn."[17] At another place, Ibn Ṭāwūs noted that Ḥusayn had a large head.[18]

b) *Ḥusayn's beard is thick, like the beards of his father and grandfather*

Maqātil literature often refers to Ḥusay's beard, reporting that when he was wounded, he smeared his beard and his head with his blood and said: "This is how I shall meet my God, smeared with my own blood, since I have been despoiled of my right to rule."[19] As with in other features, the authors of the *maqātil* elaborate on the

[15] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 39.
[16] Ibid., p. 45.
[17] Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, p. 69.
[18] Ibid., p. 76.
[19] Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, p. 64.

similarity of Ḥusayn's outward appearance to that of his father 'Alī and his grandfather Muḥammad, who were both full-bearded (*'aẓīm al-liḥya*). Being a hereditary Imam and the successor of his father and grandfather, Ḥusayn would naturally display a similar exterior appearance and resembling traits.

From Muḥammad's biography we learn that the Prophet's beard reached his breast (*mala'at liḥyatuhu mā bayna hādhihi ilā hādhihi qad mala'at naḥrahu*).[20] Ḥusayn's father 'Alī was also full-bearded and his beard was as long and large as the Prophet's.[21]

In the *maqtal* Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā tells us about a tradition he heard from Umm Ja'far, 'Alī's maidservant, who said: "I was washing 'Alī's hand, and all of a sudden, he seized his beard and pulled it up to his nose, and he spoke to his beard and said: Woe unto you, for on next Friday you will be smeared in blood and that's what happened."[22]

A similar story is told in the Akhṭab Khawārizm *maqtal*, but this time it refers to Ḥusayn. Khawārizm says: "When Abū al-Ḥutūf al-Ju'afī shot a three-headed arrow, the arrow hit Ḥusayn on his forehead. Ḥusayn pulled the arrow out and threw it on the soil. Blood poured off his forehead like water flowing from a gutter and covered his face and his beard. Then he started filling his hands with it and tossed it towards heaven. Afterwards, he smeared his beard and cried out: 'Thus shall I meet my grandfather Muḥammad in Paradise, like my father met him.'"[23]

Another trait of the exterior appearance is the light shining from ġusayn 's face, a light reaching the zenith of heaven. This light was generally seen at night-time, after his head was cutoff.

The authors of the *maqātil* are probably induced to stress the radiance of the face by their belief that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and, before him, the Prophet Muḥammad, came into existence as a light that descended from the loins of Adam, until it reached the loins of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather. Here the light splits into two parts: one half reaches Muḥammad through his father 'Abd Allāh, and the other half is given to 'Alī through his father Ṭālib. From 'Alī, the light passed to his two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, and from them down to the twelfth Imam.

Several traditions relate in detail this transmigration of light from the time of Adam and down to the twelfth Imam. One such narrative appears in the book by al-

[20] Ibid., pp. 41, 319.

[21] 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashī ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Maqtal Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ṭabaṭbā'ī), Qum 1408/1988 ("Turāthunā", 12), pp. 93, 106,108.

[22] Ibid., pp. 11, 108, 110.

[23] Khawārizm, *Maqtal*, p.39.

Mas'ūdī *Iṯbāt al-waṣiyya* on the Imam 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib,[24] about the spark called the light of God (*nūr Allāh*), the light of wisdom (*nūr al-ḥikma*) or simply the light (*al-nūr*). This light illuminates the souls of the Imams and symbolizes the divine spirit, which bestows divine virtues upon its holders.[25]

III.2 *Ḥusayn's clothing*

The meticulous description of Ḥusayn s clothing is given a considerable place in *maqātil* literature. Authors of the *maqātil* attached a great importance to the way Ḥusayn was dressed, and they emphasized the fact that he wore his grandfather Muḥammad's clothes, which he had inherited from his father 'Alī and his brother Ḥasan. The question is: why did the authors of the *maqātil* place such a stress on this subject? The answer is that the Shī'ites consider Ḥusayn to be the successor of his father 'Alī and his grandfather, the Prophet. In order to fulfill this mission, he must identify himself with them in everything, including in his outward appearance and his clothing.

I think that the authors also wanted to say that although the matter in question is only the outer clothing, which is but an exterior shell, it reflects their inner and genuine belief. These are sacred garments, but at the same time they must be magnificent clothes that strike awe in the hearts of the masses. In addition to the clothes of his grandfather, Ḥusayn also uses the Prophet's own arms and rides his horse and sometimes his camel. Abū Mikhnaf says: "When Ḥusayn was in Karbalā, at the end of his prayer he put on his grandfather's armour, covered his head with his grandfather's turban, known as al-Saḥāb, and girded the sword Dhū al-Faqār; then he faced the enemy, the Umayyad."[26] More particulars are the following:

[24] Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, *Ithbāt al-waṣiyya li-l-Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, no place, no date. I, pp. 17, 52, 69, 74, 137.

[25] For details, see: E. Kolberg, "The Shī'a, 'Alī's faction", in *Contestation and Revolution in Shī'ite Islam* (Hebrew), ed. M. Kremer, Tel-Aviv: Kibbutz Meuhad, 1985, p. 15; U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and light, Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *IOS*, 5 (1975), pp. 62-119; Muḥammad 'Alī Amīr-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shī'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, transl. by D. Streight, State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 29-43. See also, U. Rubin, *The Prophet Muḥammad in Ancient ḥadīth Literature* (Hebrew). Ph.D. thesis, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv 1976, I, pp. 154-155. See also: Abū Ja'far ibn Ya'qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Ja'far Shams al-Dīn, Beirut: Dār al-Ta'āruf li-l-maṭbū'āt, 1411/1990, I, pp. 244-257; Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Awṣāf al-nabī*, ed. Samīḥ 'Abbās, Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, no date, pp. 28, 31, 100, 264.

[26] Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā (Abū Mikhnaf), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn 'alayhi al-salām*, ed. 'Umar Abū al-Naṣr, Beirut 1971, p. 58.

a) *Ḥusayn's burnous*

Some sources report that Ḥusayn wore the burnous he had inherited.[27] Traditions found in the Ibn Namā, Ibn Ṭāwūs, and Abū Mikhnaf *maqātil*[28] describe the garment worn by Ḥusayn as being the Prophet's burnous. According to other sources, mainly Sunnite, the Prophet Muḥammad offered one of his burnouses to the poet Jāhilī Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, when Ka'b came to beg his pardon for having vilified him. The sources relate that the Prophet forgave Ka'b and presented him one of his burnouses as a gift. Later on, the first Umayyad Caliph (661-680) bought the garment from Ka'b ibn Zuhayr for 600 dinars and it kept on passing from one Calif to the next and was considered by them as a symbol of blessing.[29]

b) *The Prophet's turban (al-Ṣaḥāb)*

Ibn Ṭāwūs reports: When Ḥusayn had taken position to face the Umayyad army, he made a speech to glorify his family, reminding his listeners that he was scion of the Prophet, specifying the exceptional traits and the virtues of the Alids and how these superiorities distinguish them from other people (from the Umayyad). Among the matters mentioned in his speech, and in order to frighten the Umayyad warriers, he said: "Didn't you know that this turban which I put on my head is the turban of Allāh's messenger?",[30] without, however, mentioning that he was referring to the illustrious turban al-Saḥāb.[31]

c) *The sword of Ḥusayn, Dhū al-Faqār* [32]

We must, of course, emphasize the fact that the Arabs, like other peoples, customarily names to their arms and boasted about their swords at the time of the battle, when some warrior challenged an enemy to a duel. Some of the names given to swords are connected with the place where these swords were manufactured, for example *sayf hindī,* a sword connected with India where it was made. This name

[27] Ibid., p. 85.

[28] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 40.

[29] See 'Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥmmad 'Ismā'īl al-Tha'ālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb fī al-muḍāf wa-l-manṣūb,* ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1985, p. 61. See also: Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad, *Dirāsāt fī adab wa nuṣūṣ al-'aṣr al-islāmī*, Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1986, p. 87.

[30] Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, p. 49.

[31] The turban al-Saḥāb was black and has been compared to a rain-laden cloud (*saḥāb*). The Prophet's turban was considered a symbol of blessing. See: Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1990, I, p. 461, s.v. *"s ḥ b"*.

[32] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, pp. 59, 83. For the sword Dhū al-Faqār see my article "The Sword 'dhū al-faqār' in Shi'ite Literature", *al-Karmil.* Studies in Arabic Language and Literature [University of Haifa], 21-22 (2000-2001), , pp. 201-218.

means that the sword is either of an excellent quality or of iron imported from India. Another example is *sayf yamānī,* a sword made in Yemen.

As for the sword Dhū al-Faqār, it had two heads. The Shi'ites claim that this sword was taken from heaven by Adam, was made of myrtle, and had been used by Adam to fight hostile devils. An inscription on the sword told that it would always be used by prophets in their wars, each prophet in his turn, till it was inherited by 'Alī who resorted to it in defense of Muḥammad. The sword continued to pass on by legacy until it came into the hands of Ḥusayn who fought with it at Karbalā. After Ḥusayn was killed, the sword was inherited by other Imams.[33]

According to Sunnite sources, the sword Dhū al-Faqār had belonged to Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjāj, and the Prophet seized it as booty in the battle of Badr (March 16, 624). After the battle he offered it as a present to his cousin 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, to reward him for his heroic fighting.[34] We thus observe deep contradictions between Shi'ite and Sunnite sources regarding the history of the sword.

In the *maqtal* Ibn Ṭāwūs al-Lahūf, the sword is not mentioned by name. But when standing facin the Umayyad army, Ḥusayn praises his sword (without naming it) and says: "Did you know that this sword is the Prophet's sword?" In another place, Ibn Ṭāwūs asserts that the sword Ḥusayn fought with in the *maqātil* was not Dhū al-Faqār. He also adds that the Dhū al-Faqār was preserved with other possessions[35] of the Prophet and the Imams,[36] without mentioning the place where it was kept. Finally, Ibn Ṭāwūs reports the existence of several versions of the identity of the plunderer who took hold of Ḥusayn s sword. He mentions two persons, both whom could have stolen the sword. The sword is not mentioned in the *maqtal* Ibn Namā. However, the author notes that Ḥusayn's sword was stolen after his death by Ibn al-Falāfis al-Nahshalī or by Jāmi' ibn al-Khalq.[37] This sword is very important to the Shi'ites.

[33] See Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Sarawī al-Mazandarānī ibn Shahrashūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, ed. Yūsuf al-Buqā'ī, Beirut: Dār al-'Aswā', 1993, III, p. 81. Other versions are mentioned there concerning the origin of the sword.

[34] See Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Wāqid al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī,* ed. M. Jones, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li-l-maṭbū'āt, 1409/1989[3], p. 209. See also Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, no date, I, p. 485 sqq.

[35] This represents the pattern by which the *waṣiyya* was passed on from Muḥammad to 'Alī and afterwards to the other imams. Also the *waṣiyya* itself consisted of several details symbolizing its sublime character. One of the most important is Muḥammad's sword, Dhū al-Faqār, and other items, such as the al-Jafir book that was in the possession of the prophets and came into the hands of Shi'ite imams, and also the *al-ṣaḥīfa al-jāmi'a*, and others.

[36] Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, pp. 77, 91.

[37] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 72.

Not all sources refer to Ḥusayn's clothing or to his sword. In the *maqtal* Ibn Ṭāwūs al-Lahūf, we do not find much about Ḥusayn's garment, nor does the *maqtal* Akhṭab Khawārizm make any mention of Ḥusayn's clothing. As to the sword used by Ḥusayn in his battles, it is not even mentioned in the entire *maqtal* Akhṭab Khawārizm.

III.3. *Ḥusayn's horse*

Ḥusayn's horse plays an important role in *Maqātil* literature. It is said to have been one of the Prophet's horses and it was inherited by Ḥusayn from his brother Ḥasan. Opinions differ concerning the horse's name. Abū Mikhnaf writes that it was called Maymūn,[38] while Akhṭab Khawārizm believes that its name was al-Murtajiz.[39] The horse behaves like a human being and has even special attributes owing to its being the Prophet's horse.

Animals which behave like human beings, understand their thoughts, and speak their language are regarded in popular literature as bringing prosperity. These animals are friends to the man and they often save him from death, or at least courageously fight at the side of their master. Not only that: animals pray, fulfill commandments, and, as in the present case, are endowed with superior traits: they disclose secret wisdom and anticipate the future.[40]

Sure enough, Ḥusayn's horse fought courageously at the side of his present master, as it had done with its former three masters, the Prophet, 'Alī and Ḥasan, and it anticipated what was to happen. Abū Mikhnaf writes: "When Ḥusayn arrived at Karbalā on the back of his horse, the animal stopped and would not move forwards though Ḥusayn spurred it to advance further." The authors of the *maqātil* wish thus to indicate that the horse knew as well as its master that Ḥusayn's fate was to be settled at Karbalā.

[38] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 48.

[39] Khawārizm, *Maqtal*, p. 38. The ancient Arabs would give their thoroughbred horses special names. In their stories of battles and heroism, Arabs glorify their horses and recount the heroic acts of these horses during the fights. Hishām ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣā'ib al-Kalbī has a long list of more than 100 names of horses and of their masters (*Ansāb al-khayl*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1946, p.129). As to the name Murtajiz, the writer Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī points out that the horse of the Prophet was named Murtajiz, because of its harmonious neighing (*summiya bi-dhālika li-ḥusn ṣahīlihi*); see *Kitāb al-Munammaq fī akhbār Quraysh*, ed. Khurshid Aḥmad Fārūq, Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1985, p. 406. See also: 'Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ziyād al-A'rābī, *Asmā' khayl al-'arab wa-fursānihā,* ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, , 1984, p. 79; and also: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, V, p. 305, s.v. *"r j z"*.

[40] For details see: Dov Noy, *Forms and Designs in Popular Tales*, ed. by Edna Chichili, Jerusalem 1983, pp.102-103.

A similar story is told about the Prophet Muḥammad's camel: When Muḥammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina, people from each of the different clans in the region invited him to settle down with them. The Prophet said: "We shall let the camel free, and it will lead us." The camel made its way towards the clan of the son of Ibn al-Najjār, at Qubā', and there it knelt down. All the Prophet's efforts to make it advance further were in vain. At this place was built the first mosque.

And now, back to Ḥusayn's horse. Abū Mikhnaf quotes a tradition connected with 'Alī who said at the battle of Ṣiffīn (657), near Karbalā: "My son Ḥusayn will be killed at Karbalā, while being thirsty, and his horse will panic, will neigh and say: 'Disaster, disaster, woe onto the people who killed the Prophet's grandson!'"[41]

And indeed, when Ḥusayn was killed at the end of the battle, his horse began to neigh, leaping over the corpses of the killed fighters, one corpse after the other, until it reached Ḥusayn's body (*waqafa 'alā juthat al-Ḥusayn*). It collapsed on him, smeared its mane with Ḥusayn's blood and hid its head into the earth as a sign of grief at Ḥusayn's death. Then the horse started neighing so loudly that its whinny could be heard all over the desert. The commander of the Umayyad army, 'Umar ibn Sa'd, was amazed by the terrible sight before his eyes and shouted to his men: "Woe on you, bring it to me, this is a horse from the horses of Allāh's messenger."[42] Some of the men approached the horse to catch it. But when the horse became aware of the danger, it began to kick about and to offer resistance, till it killed several warriors and caused many riders to tumble down from their mount. Every effort to catch it was in vain. After that, the horse again smeared its mane in Ḥusayn's blood, shedding tears like a human being.

And then, the horse galloped towards the tents of Ḥusayn's men. When they saw it and heard it neighing and crying, they understood that the horse was bringing them terrible news: the news of Ḥusayn's death. Then the horse left the men's tents, broke into a gallop towards the Euphrates that flowed nearby, and threw itself into the water.

Here, the authors of the *maqtal* draw a comparison between Ḥusayn's horse and the Prophet's ass, 'Afīr, which also killed itself after Muḥammad's death. When the ass became aware that its master, the Prophet, had died, it broke the rope that tethered it and started running till it reached a well belonging to his son Khuṭama, near Qubā'. It threw itself into the well, which became its tomb.

In this connection there is a tradition related to 'Alī, the Amīr of the Faithful, who said: "The ass 'Afīr talked with Allāh's messenger and said to him:

[41] Ibid.
[42] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 45.

Forgiveness on my father and mother, and I was told by my father who heard it from his grandfather who heard it from his father, who was with Noah on his Ark, that Noah patted his back and said: 'Among your offspring will be an ass which will be ridden by the Prophet, the last of the prophets. I praise God for myself being that ass.'"[43] Abū Mikhnaf says that Ḥusayn's horse will rise from the dead on doomsday, when al-Mahdī (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*) will come.[44] This might be connected with the Jewish concept of the resurrection that will take place on the day when the Messiah arrives, riding an ass.

IV. *Ḥusayn's image: his character and personality*

IV.1. *Following the commandment of praying at the appointed time*

Maqātil literature stresses the fact that Ḥusayn and his followers are steadfast in their faith and frequently read from the Qur'ān.[45] Ḥusayn is described as praying regularly at the appointed time, despite difficult circumstances that often coincide with the time of prayer. Ḥusayn mostly led the prayers, and his followers stood behind him. But, even after he had been killed, his severed head went on reading portions and surahs from the Qur'ān.[46]

The importance of keeping the appointed time for prayer is stressed in the Qur'ān. In Qur. 2:238, we find: "Observe that the five prayers be read at their time"; in Qur. 4:103: "Say your prayers in the form and at the time prescribed to the Faithful". Qur'ān commentators insist upon punctuality in the observance of prayer times, especially the middle prayer. Let us also recall that a similar emphasis appears in the Talmud: "And said Rabbi Halbo A.R. Hona, one has always to be punctual for the Minha prayer [...]. Rabbi Johanan said the same for the evening prayer [...], and R. Bar Yizhak for the morning prayer" (*Blessings* 6).

Three of the four *maqātil* we are dealing with in the present work refer to the subject of prayer at the appointed time. The *maqtal* Akhṭab Khawārizm informs us that Ḥusayn and his followers read the Qur'ān and prayed during the first nine nights of the month of Muḥarram, in the year 61/680.[47] This is perhaps the place to note that modern Shī'ites follow Ḥusayn and his supporters and have made their

[43] Abū Ja'far ibn Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, I, p. 293.

[44] Ibid., p. 99.

[45] The commandment of keeping the time appointed for the prayer is an integral part of the faith. For details, see: Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Kitāb Tafsīr al-khams mi'at āya min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, ed. by Y. Goldfeld, Shfar'am: Dār al-Mashriq, 1980, pp. 14-16.

[46] For details, see Ch. IV, The motif of the decapitated head, in Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, pp. 215-224.

[47] Akhṭab Khawārizm, *Maqtal*, p. 30.

customs the rule. They frequently read the Qur'ān and the *maqātil*, especially during the seven nights in the month of Muḥarram.

The Ibn Ṭāwūs *maqtal* also mentions that Ḥusayn always kept the appointed time for prayer, never missing a prayer, and usually praying at the appointed time. Here is what it says:[48] When Ḥusayn was living in Mecca, before he went to Iraq, as soon as the time for prayer arrived, he prayed (apparently alone) at one of the two sacred places: *al-rukn wa-l-maqām*.[49]

The Ibn Namā *maqtal* does not speak of Ḥusayn's prayers because it is abridged, and concentrates only upon central events and motifs, as explained by the author himself in his introduction.

The Abū Mikhnaf *maqtal*, however, assigns considerable space to Ḥusayn's prayers. The fact of keeping the appointed time for prayer finds its highest expression during the Karbalā campaign. Being already on his way to the battle, Ḥusayn faces the problem of praying in due time. Abū Mikhnaf says: When Ḥusayn encamped at al-Tha'labiyya, all of a sudden appeared before him a troop of 1000 horsemen from 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army, under the command of al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāḥī. Al-Ḥurr and his warriors were thirsty and asked Ḥusayn and his followers to give them some water. Ḥusayn granted this request and allowed them and their horses to drink their fill. By now it was the time of prayer. ġusayn got up and placed himself at the head of the worshippers, while both camps – his and his enemies' – stood behind him, praying.[50]

Abū Mikhnaf tells us that after the battle had begun Ḥusayn asked his brother al-'Abbās to approach 'Umar ibn Sa'd, the commander of the Umayyad forces, to request him to defer the fight for one day so that Ḥusayn and his followers might pray and read the Qur'ān for one more night. Al-'Abbās's request was granted. Ibn Ṭāwūs adds that during all this night a buzzing like the buzzing of bees was heard from Ḥusayn's camp,[51] as they read the Qur'ān and prayed.[52]

After his brother al-'Abbās was killed, Ḥusayn urged his followers to break up and escape at night, but they refused. The next morning, Ḥusayn got up and said the morning prayer together with his supporters.[53] During the battle of Karbalā, it was

[48] Ibid., p. 20.

[49] Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1399/1979, V, p. 163, s.v. "*r k n*".

[50] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 40.

[51] Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, p. 50.

[52] The comparison between the voices of Ḥusayn and his followers, while praying and reading the Qur'ān, with the buzzing of bees recurs in all the *maqātil*. For details on this comparison, see Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, p. 222.

[53] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Lahūf*, p. 58.

once again time for prayer. Then Ḥusayn called the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd to interrupt the fighting, so that he and his followers might be able to pray. 'Umar ibn Sa'd granted the request and ordered his men to temporarily cease fighting.[54]

From all the above we infer that according to *maqātil* literature Ḥusayn was steadfast in his faith, followed the commandments of prayer at the time appointed by the Qur'ān, and did not defer the time of a prayer under any circumstances, even if this entailed the most grave complications.

IV.2. *Ḥusayn's weeping*

Another trait of Ḥusayn that appears in the *maqātil* is his deep feeling, grief, and sensitivity. In several situations he sheds tears and even is overcome by sobbing. Here too we must compare Ḥusayn with the Prophet Muḥammad, weeping being one of the latter's traits. Ibn al-Jawzī quotes several versions telling that the Prophet used to shed bitter tears. A study of these traditions shows us that the Prophet's crying could stem from several causes: a) anxiety over the future of the Muslim people; b) act of grace to God for His multiple favours; c) supplication for God's pity; d) sometimes, the Prophet's crying expressed the longing of the lover for his beloved (*shawq al-ḥabib ilā ḥabībihi*).

The Prophet is reported to have said: "Alas God, turn my two eyes into crying eyes and make me appear in thy sight before the tears become blood and both become embers."[55] We therefore see that crying is a permanent feature in the Prophet's image, and since there is a great similarity between the characteristics of the Prophet and of his grandson Ḥusayn, the trait of crying appears likewise to be permanent in Ḥusayn.

The question is: in what circumstances and when does Ḥusayn weep? Authors of *maqātil* record some emotions and situations that Ḥusayn experienced at a given time which caused him to cry. Ḥusayn weeps for the first time when he decides to leave the Hijaz and go to Iraq. He visits his grandfather's grave in Medina and sheds bitter tears there, as he knows the fate that awaits him.[56]

Ḥusayn cries for the second time when his son, 'Alī al-Akbar, asks for his permission to take part in the battle. Ḥusayn gives his consent[57] and tears flow from his eyes. Later he learns that his son has been killed by an arrow. Ḥusayn fills his hands with his son's blood, tosses it towards heaven and cries.[58] The third time is

[54] Ibid., p. 20.

[55] Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā bi-aḥwāl al-Muṣṭafā,* Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1374/1955.

[56] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 15.

[57] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 35.

[58] Ibid., p. 84; see also p. 35.

when he hears that Ibn 'Umar's army has decided to kill him because they hate his father, 'Alī.[59]

Other occasions when Ḥusayn burst into tears are these: when his nephew al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan asks for his permission to take part in the battle. He gives his consent and starts crying, since he knows that his nephew will be killed. Ḥusayn also sheds tears when he learns that one of his warriors fell in the battle,[60] and he weeps bitterly on hearing that his brother al-'Abbās has been killed.[61]

The popular *maqātil* mention many more cases of crying than reported in the canonic literature. A study of the popular *maqtal* ascribed to al-Isfarāyīnī *Nūr al-'ayn, fī mashhad al-Ḥusayn*,[62] reveals the following circumstances of Ḥusayn's crying: when his brother, al-'Abbās fell;[63] when he failed to obtain drinking water from the river Euphrates;[64] when his son, al-Qāsim, was killed;[65] when he learns of the hostility of the second Calif, Yazīd, towards him;[66] when he reads the epistle of the people of Kūfa, inviting him to Kūfa;[67] when he comes to Karbalā and says: this is a land of grief and disaster;[68] when he fails to persuade Ibn 'Umar to renounce the fighting;[69] when all his followers who took part in the battle are killed and he remains alone in the fight. In all these cases Ḥusayn burst into bitter tears.

IV.3. *Bynames given to Ḥusayn in* maqātil *literature*

The exceptional traits of Ḥusayn and the virtues ascribed to him find their expression in the multiple bynames or epithets that have been used by authors of *maqātil*. Ḥusayn is a central character of *maqātil* and most of them turn on his image. This image is endowed, as we saw above, with many sublime attributes, since he is a descendant of the Prophet and an imam continuing in his path. Because of these two facts, authors of the *maqātil* have given Ḥusayn several epithets

[59] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal,* p. 85.
[60] Ibid., p. 24.
[61] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal,* p. 66.
[62] Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, *Nūr al-'ayn fī mashhad al-Ḥusayn* , Cairo: Maktabat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-awlādihi, 1374/1955[3].
[63] Ibid., p. 42.
[64] Ibid., p. 32.
[65] Ibid., p. 44.
[66] Ibid., p. 45.
[67] Ibid., p. 7.
[68] Ibid., p. 12.
[69] Ibid., p. 32.

reflecting the superlative traits which are related to the Prophet, as quoted in the sources.[70]

A thorough investigation of the *maqātil* examined in the present research yields no less than 42 such appellations only some of which are mentioned here.[71] By their means Shi'ite authors refer to the following attributes and characteristics.[72]

a) Ḥusayn's consanguinity with the Prophet Muḥammad:

Ibn bint rasūl Allāh [the grandson of God's messenger – 9]; ibn rasūl Allāh [son of God's messenger – 6]; ibn bint al-nabī [the son of the Prophet's daughter – 1]; ibn Fāṭima sayyidat al-nisā' [the son of Fāṭima, lady of the women – 1]; thamarat fu'ād al-zahrā' al-batūl [fruit of the heart and the love of the virgin - 1]; khāmis aṣḥāb al-kisā' [the fifth of those who wore the Prophet's cloack - 1]; ibn nabī Allāh [son of Allāh's prophet – 2]; ibn khātam al-nabiyyīn [son of the last prophet]; shafī' [son of the champion of the right – 1]; farkh al-rasūl [offspring of the messenger – 1]; mizāj mā' al-rasūl [the messenger's descendant – 1]; thamart fu'ād al-rasūl [fruit of the messenger's heart – 1]; salīl khatim al-nubuwwa [offspring of the last prophet – 1]; salīl al-hudā [offspring of him who goes the right way – 1].

b) Ḥusayn is an imam continuing in the path of his father 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and he therefore is the leader and the guide of his people:

al-imām [6]; abū al-a'imma [the father of the imams – 1]; ibn 'Alī al-murtaḍā [the son of 'Alī in the will of God].

c) Ḥusayn was unjustly killed at Karbalā:

al-shahīd al-maẓlūm [martyr for God's sake and unjustly fallen – 2]; Ḥusayn al-madhbūḥ [Ḥusayn the slaughtered – 1]; abū 'abd Allāh al-maqtūl [father of Allah's servant who was maliciously killed]; ṣāḥib al-Ṭaf [name of the place where Ḥusayn was killed - 1]; al-farkh al-azhar al-maẓlūm [the offspring with a radiant face, the wronged].

d) Ḥusayn was killed as a martyr (*shahīd*) and he will gain a seat in Paradise:

[70] See Maḥmoud, Ayoub. "The excellence of Imam Ḥusayn in Sunni ḥadīth tradition", *Al-Serat*, 12, (1986), pp. 58-70.

[71] In modern Muslim literature, the number of Ḥusayn 's bynames reaches 70. For details, see for example: Tawfīq 'Abū al-'Alam, *al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī*, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990, p.65; see also: *Tārīkh Ahl al-Bayt naqlᵃᵐ 'an al-a'imma al-Bāqir wa-l-Ṣādiq wa-l-Riḍā wa-l-'Askarī 'an ābā'ihim 'alayhim al-salām*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ḥusaynī, Beirut: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt 'alayhim al-salām li-Iḥyā' al-turāth, 1411/1940, p.132.

[72] The number appearing alongside each byname shows the frequency of its appearance in the *maqātil* studied in this work.

al-shahīd [the martyr – 1]; sayyid shabāb ahl al-Janna [the master of the Paradise young – 3]; ibn sādāt al-shuhadā' [son of martyrs masters – 1]; al-shahīd al-maẓlūm [the oppressor martyr]; al-sibṭ al-shahīd [the grandson (of the Prophet) martyr].

V. *Heroic deeds and working of miracles*

V.1. *Feats of heroism displayed by Ḥusayn*

Ḥusayn is described as being endowed with many powers, some of which are supernatural and were inherited from his father and his grandfather. These powers allow him to perform the heroic deeds reported in the *maqātil* and depicted as extraordinary; they are acts of a superhuman heroism, which exceed the power of man and bear a divine character. They are the supreme forces displayed by prophets, their heirs, and their descendants.

At the battle of Karbalā, Ḥusayn did not retreat before the enemy who exceeded his troops in numbers and in strength. He was not afraid of death. He is told to have leapt forth against the Umayyad camp and killed a great many horsemen, about 1500, during the first attack and as many in the second one. When the two camps, that of Ḥusayn and that of 'Umar ibn Sa'd met, Ḥusayn challenged any of Ibn Sa'd's horsemen to a duel; every horseman that came to fight him was killed. Ḥusayn went on fighting till he had killed a great many of them.[73]

Later on, he was assaulted by 30,000 horsemen. He is told to have charged and pushed them away. They scattered and disbanded in all directions, like goats attacked by a wolf. Sometimes we find another comparison for the scattering of Ibn Sa'd's army; it is written that the enemies dispersed like a swarm of locusts,[74] so frightened were they by Ḥusayn.

When Ḥusayn's cousin, al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan, cried out for help during the battle, Ḥusayn came running to save him and stood by him like a hawk. He saved him from the Umayyad army with the courage[75] and the heroism of a lion.[76] At the end of the battle, Ḥusayn fell and was killed only because he was pierced by a

[73] Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf,* p. 66.

[74] Both mentioned comparisons recur throughout Muslim literature, and they are characteristic of the style. For details, see: Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, pp. 249-50.

[75] Abū Mukhnaf, *Maqtal,* p.85. See also: Ibn Namā, *Muthīr,* p. 37 and Khawārizim, *Maqtal*, p. 27.

[76] One of the names given to Ḥusayn's father, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, is "Ḥaydara", the lion, which emphasizes his heroism. Authors of the *maqātil* stress the similarity between Ḥusayn's and 'Alī's heroic behaviour.

three-headed poisoned arrow. Only then did he lose a large quantity of blood[77] and he collapsed. The *maqātil* report that 72 wounds by sword had been inflicted on his body.

In sum, authors of the *maqātil* attached a great importance to Ḥusayn's heroic behaviour at the battle of Karbalā. This heroism is displayed in multiple ways: Ḥusayn killed a large number of fighters from the Umayyad army; Ḥusayn leapt upon the enemy camp like a lion and a hawk and scattered the enemy warriors in all directions; Ḥusayn held on; he received 72 sword blows and was not killed; he was killed only when hit by a three-headed poisoned arrow.

Ḥusayn is not a hero because he is a powerful man with physical strength. He amazed the people around him because his heroism – like the heroism of his grandfather, the Prophet, his father, his brother Ḥasan and the other imams - did not derive from physical power but from the fact that something within him acted in a different way; in other words, Ḥusayn is a conduit of prophetic and divine revelation.

V.2. *Ḥusayn as a performer of miracles and wonders*

Maqātil literature describes Ḥusayn as a performer of miracles, looked upon by society as an ideal, since he was gifted by God with the power of working miracles, just like his grandfather and his father. He is defined as a saint performing miracles and wonders that are inaccessible to ordinary men. Allāh granted him this power in order to strengthen his trust and his faith in God and also the respect he enjoys among the people.

Miracles and wonders are phenomena characterizing the saints, and they embody Allāh's respect and esteem for these holy men. Some people assert that miracles and wonders help the saint to fulfill the commandments and are a proof of his integrity and righteousness.[78] Authors of the *maqātil* are eager to stress that Ḥusayn worked miracles and that he is the chosen man, because of his piety and his integrity. By attributing to Ḥusayn the gift of working miracles, they generate in the hearer/reader recognition of Ḥusayn's right to hold power as an Imam, a leader and a guide unto the community.

The miraculous deeds have many facets in Maqātil literature.

[77] The blood pouring from Ḥusayn 's heart is comparable to water flowing from a gutter. For details, see for example Khawārizm, *Maqtal,* p. 38.

[78] For details, see: Ṣābir Muṣṭafā As'ad, "The Ziyārāt of 'Abd al-Ghanī ibn Ismā'īl ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulsī in Syria and the Land of Israel", in his work *al-Ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz fī riḥlat bilād al-Shām wa Miṣr wa-l-Ḥijāz, Ms. Vienna (Fluegel 1269) MXT 712*, diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 1957, pp. 23-24.

a) Most of Ḥusayn's miracles related in Muslim literature are aimed at saving him and his people, as seen in *al-faraj* literature, in *ba'da al-shidda* and in martyrology, where we find tales of miracles and wonders. Most of the events where Ḥusayn appears as the miracle worker revolve around salvation and deliverance.

b) In other cases, the miracle worked by Ḥusayn punishes the enemy. This happens when the enemy's cruelty increases and all hope for an improvement of his behaviour is lost; then God compensates Ḥusayn for the harsh realities of life. Ḥusayn is made to believe in the presence of secret forces that are able to save him from the calamity he faces, and the miracle occurs.

c) While some miracles are immediate and God answers Ḥusayn's call there and then, others happen only after several days or months.

a) *Miracles that bring salvation*

Sometimes we read stories of miracles that are not of a great importance, such as this: Ḥusayn's elder son, 'Alī (al-Akbar) longed for grapes when they were not in season. Ḥusayn struck with his hand a column of the mosque, produced from it grapes and bananas, fed his son and said: "God gives the saints more than they need."[79]

At another occasion Ḥusayn camped under a dried-up palm tree. He spread out his rug under the tree, lifted his hand in prayer and muttered a few words. Suddenly the tree turned green, grew leaves and produced dates. The owner of the camel that Ḥusayn had hired was scared and said: "This is witchcraft!" but Ḥusayn answered: "Woe on you, this is no witchcraft, but an appeal from the Prophet's grandson that has been immediately answered!"[80]

Sometimes the miracle is connected with real salvation. As recalled, one of the main difficulties faced by Ḥusayn and his army at the Karbalā battle was thirst.[81] Several miracles are ascribed to Ḥusayn in this connection: Ḥusayn's son, 'Alī, performs feats of heroism, kills 120 horsemen, and returns from the battle with severe wounds. He goes to his father and tells him that his forces are weakened by an extreme thirst, adding: "If I could take only one gulp of water, I would be able to defeat the enemy."[82] Ḥusayn wept and said: "Come near me and stick out your tongue." Ḥusayn sucked his tongue, gave him a ring and said: "Take this ring in

[79] Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustum al-Ṭabarī (al-ṣaghīr), *Dalā'il al-imāma,* Qum: Qism al-Dirāsāt al Islamiyya, Mu'assasat al-Bi'tha, 1413/1993, p. 183.

[80] Ibid., p. 185.

[81] See Ch. IV, the Motif of thirst, in Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, pp. 211-14.

[82] Khawārizm, *Maqtal*, p. 31.

your mouth and go back to fight." And, behold – says Akhṭab Khawārizm, "'Alī's throat was wet, his thirst disappeared and he returned to the battle."[83]

Not only did Ḥusayn save his son from thirst, but also all his men. On one occasion, Ḥusayn called his followers and told them: "Whoever is thirsty, let him come to me." All his warriors approached and he put his thumb into the hand of one of them. All of a sudden, water gushed from the hand and all of them drank to their heart's content. The water was very tasty, with a savour unknown in this world.

This reminds us of the story of Moses and the Hebrews, when Moses made water gush from the rock to quench the thirst of his people. The manna and the quails that the Hebrews ate in the wilderness are similarly recalled by this other miracle: Ḥusayn's men suffered from hunger during the battle and there was nothing for them to eat. Ḥusayn called out: "The table is laid," and there appeared immediately a table laden with all kinds of food. Ḥusayn fed his men and also himself, and he quenched their thirst with drinks from Paradise.[84]

b) *Miracles aiming at punishment*

In the *maqtal* Abū Mikhnaf we find the following tradition: At the time of the battle of Karbalā a man called Jubayra al-Kalbī cursed Ḥusayn and challenged him to fight. Ḥusayn asked him what his name was, and he answered: Jubayra al-Kalbī. Thereupon Ḥusayn said: "Oh God, burn him in the fire of this world before he arrives at the fire of hell!"[85] The moment Ḥusayn had finished his plea, God answered it immediately. All of a sudden, Jubayra's horse lept forward and threw the rider into a ditch. He was severely wounded in the head and was burned at once. Ḥusayn's followers exclaimed: "Allāh akbar" (Allāh is the greatest of all) and expressed their amazement at God's immediate answer to Ḥusayn. Then a divine voice was heard from Heaven, saying to Ḥusayn: "God acceded to your request and blesses you." 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army was stunned and frightened; they reacted by cursing, by scorn and abuse.[86] The authors of the *maqātil* considered this miracle a punishment of the enemy. This kind of miracle not only saved Ḥusayn from danger, it also led to disastrous consequences for those who had plotted against him and were duly punished. A fighter from 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army shot an arrow at Ḥusayn at a time when Ḥusayn was drinking water. The arrow hit him at the corner of his mouth and Ḥusayn cursed him and said to him: "Would that the Creator shall never more quench your thirst!"[87]

[83] Ibid.
[84] al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il*, pp. 188-89.
[85] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal,* p. 62.
[86] Ibid., p. 63.
[87] Ibid., p. 94.

Another tradition, quoted in the Ibn Namā *maqtal* is this:
"Ḥusayn cursed a man named Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'at, from 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army (*bi-'an yaj'alahu allāh āyat*^{an} *li-aṣḥābihi*), asking the Creator to make an example of him for his fellow warriors. All of a sudden the man's horse threw him. His foot got caught in the ring of his spur, and the horse kicked him and tore him into two pieces. Ibn Sa'd's army was amazed to see how quickly God answered Ḥusayn's request."[88]

In all the miracles of this kind, Ḥusayn curses his enemies, especially those who cursed, scorned and abused him, and those who plotted against him. All of them are duly punished.

c) *Miracles that come to pass after a certain time*

Some of the miracles do not materialize on the spot but only a while later. When his nephew, Ibn Qāsim, was killed in the battle, Ḥusayn cursed 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army and said: "Alas, my God, deprive them of rain and of blessing." (*iḥbis 'anhum qaṭr al-samā' wa-'ḥrimhum barakātika allāhumma fa-riqqhum*). One year later, God answered Ḥusayn's request.[89]

In another connection: Once Ḥusayn fell during a battle and a man called al-Kindī came up to him and took his helmet. Ḥusayn cursed him and said: "Would it be that your right arm be cut off and that on the Day of Judgement the Creator put you into the group of the oppressors." When al-Kindī went home with Ḥusayn's helmet his wife knew what had happened and she said to him: "You are no more my husband (*lasta anta ba'l*^{un} *lī*) and I am no more your wife (*walā anā laka ahl*). I shall be no more with you under the same roof (*walā jumi'tu anā wa-anta taḥta saqf wāḥid*).[90] Al-Kindī became enraged and tried to slap his wife's face; she edged away from him and his arm hit the door knob and was cut off at the elbow. The man lived in utter poverty till the end of his days.

Another tradition related in the Ibn Namā *maqtal* tells that a man named Zar'ā ibn 'Abān ibn Dārim shot an arrow at Ḥusayn while the latter was drinking from a spring, and the arrow hit his gums. Ḥusayn cursed him, saying: "Alas, my God, let him die from thirst, and never forgive him!"[91] Ibn Namā reports: a few days later, when Zar'a woke up in the morning, he felt an intense heat in his belly and an extreme cold in his back. His folk tried to cool his front part with fans and put stoves behind him. But nothing changed, until his belly burst like a camel's belly.

[88] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 33.
[89] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 81.
[90] Ibid., p. 93.
[91] Ibn Namā, *Maqtal*, p. 37.

Miracles of another sort quoted in the *maqātil* are connected with laws of nature. I refer to the weeping of the nature and of the whole creation over Ḥusayn's death.[92] In this case the miracle happens when Ḥusayn has been already killed. The authors of the *maqātil* seemingly wish to prove that God is able to change the laws of nature when a saint is maliciously killed.

In other words, the authors of the *maqātil* try to highlight the fact that through Ḥusayn God performs miracles and wonders, during his life and after his death, just as He did with the prophets. Being a scion of the Prophet's family, Ḥusayn is gifted with attributes similar to those of the Prophet and the other Imams. One of these similarities is his capacity to work miracles and wonders.[93]

VI. *Similarities between Ḥusayn and Jesus Christ and John the Baptist*

VI.1. *Similarities between Ḥusayn and Jesus*

One of the ways chosen by *maqātil* authors in their attempt to develop Ḥusayn's image into the image of a saint was to establish a similarity between him and Jesus the Nazarene.[94] The question is how to find an analogy between two historical personalities that seem so utterly different. Shi'ites establish a connection between Ḥusayn and Jesus because both of them are superior persons and model figures. According to the belief of the Shi'tes, the Imams - Ḥusayn being one of them - are the successors of the prophets. So they emphasize the continuity of revelation in the transmission of the *waṣiyya* (legacy) from one prophet to another and, after them, to the Imams, in an uninterrupted chain. The prophets in the chain are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad.

The *waṣiyya* was revealed to the Imams in a continuous chain through the "Awṣiyā'" (the heirs) of the prophets, these being Seth, 'Imrān, Shu'ayb, Zechariah,

[92] For details on this miracle, see the motif of the weeping of nature over Ḥusayn's death, in Ch. IV, in Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, pp. 205-10.

[93] In Shi'ite literature of a literary mode exists called *Dalā'il al-Imāma*. It consists mainly in praise for the Imams, their virtues and attributes, the traits that distinguish them from ordinary people and, among other things, the miracles and wonders performed by each of them. For details, see Kohlberg, "The Shī'a", p. 15; Shadhān Ibn Jibrā'īl, *Kitāb al-Faḍā'il*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li-l-maṭbū'āt, 1988, pp. 65-85; Muḥammad ibn al-Nu'mān al-Akbarī al-Baghdādī (al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), *al-Irshād*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li-l-maṭbū'āt, 1410/1989[3], pp. 249-51.

[94] On this subject see: Maḥmoud Ayoub, "Towards an Islamic Christology: An Image of Jesus in Early Shī'i Muslim Literature", *MW*, 66 (1976), pp. 163-88. Ayoub notes that the Shi'ites also develop a similarity between 'Alī and Jesus (p. 167). As evidence he cites in two Shi'ite treatises. The first is *Tuḥfat al-'uqūl 'an āl al-rasūl*, by Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Shu'ba al-Ḥarrānī, and the second is *al-Kāfī*, by Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (op. cit., p. 170).

'Alī, and others. According to those sources, Jesus is considered the prophet who received the *waṣiyya* from Zechariah, just as Ḥusayn received the *waṣiyya* from his brother Ḥasan, who himself had been given it by his father 'Alī, who was Muḥammed's heir.

In a thorough examination of Jesus's life-history in the New Testament, I discovered several common features of Jesus and Ḥusayn. The authors of the *maqātil*, who were influenced by stories from the life of Jesus, chose several events of his life and transplanted them into their chronicles, adapting them for their readers, and dressing them in Islamic Shi'ite grab. Thus they attributed to Ḥusayn he image of a saint, descending from a family of saints.

The similarity between Jesus and Ḥusayn is expressed in the following features:

a) *The mother's pregnancy and the birth.*

b) *Supernatural forces and working of mirac'es.*

c) *Premonition.*

Ḥusayn, like Jesus before him, knew exactly the day he would die.[95] Jesus, before he died, asked the women of Jerusalem to refrain from weeping for him and from smiting their cheeks as a sign of their grief.[96] Ḥusayn too asked his wives and sisters, before he launched his last attack on Karbalā, to refrain from weeping and from smiting their cheeks as a sign of grief after his death.

When Jesus was aware that the time for his death had come, he retired in solitude and prayed. He prayed to God that He reduce the duration of his punishment: "Oh my Father, if this cup not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."[97] Likewise did ġusayn pray during the night before he was killed, as he knew that his last hour had come; he recited *ṣalāt al-khawf* (the prayer read in distress). When Jesus found himself in a difficult situation among his enemies, he said: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?"[98] The same also happened to Ḥusayn .

d) *The kind of death*

It is written in the New Testament that the priests had promised to pay Judas Iscariot thirty pieces of silver if he pointed out at Jesus and delivered him into their

[95] *The New Testament,* Matthew, 26:18.
[96] Ibid., Luke, 23:28.
[97] Ibid., Matthew, 26:42.
[98] Ibid., Matthew, 26:53.

hands.[99] It is also told in the maqatil that the Calif Yazīd promised a "dara" (ten thousands drachms) to any one who brought him Ḥusayn s head.

When Jesus was caught by his enemies, they bound him, and one of them stood up and mocked him saying: "Save thy, if thou be the Son of God, save thyself!"[100] The same thing happened to Ḥusayn, when Shamar approached to cut off his head.[101]

At the hour of his death[102] Jesus was thirsty, and so was also Ḥusayn. When his soul was leaving him, Ḥusayn said to his assassin: If you have to kill me, give me a gulp of water. But the assassin refused and mocked him, saying: In a few moments you will taste death, drop to drop.[103] Ḥusayn then, like Jesus, was to quench his thirst in heaven. Jesus would drink from the eternal cup, and Ḥusayn from a paradisiacal source.

Both were killed on a Friday and both were stabbed at their death. After Jesus' death, his killers divided his clothes among themselves.[104] Likewise, when Ḥusayn was killed, his assassins shared out his clothing and his belongings.

e) *After the death*

When Jesus died, nature shook, there was darkness over all the earth, and the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake and the rocks rent.[105] Nature suffered the same disasters when Ḥusayn was killed. The heavens darkened, the sun was eclipsed for 40 days, the horizon reddened, and blood poured from the sky.[106]

Jesus was crucified and died on a Friday and was resurrected three days later on a Sunday. He stayed on earth for 40 days and then went up to heaven, where he was seated on the right hand of God.[107] It is also told that Ḥusayn, after his death, was brought to the fifth heaven and was returned later to the earth in Karbalā, where he remained, not buried, for three days.[108]

[99] Ibid., Matthew, 16:14.

[100] Ibid., Matthew, 23:40.

[101] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 94.

[102] *The New Testament*, John, 19:28. See also Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal,* p. 99.

[103] Ibid., p. 94.

[104] *The New Testament*, John, 19:34. See also Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Mu'assasat al-Wafā', Beirut 1983[2], vol. 44, p. 199; Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf,* p.73.

[105] *The New Testament*, Luke, 23:44-45 and Matthew, 27:51.

[106] See Ch. IV, Motif of the nature weeping on Ḥusayn , in Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, pp. 205-210.

[107] *The New Testament,* Mark, 16:19.

[108] *Āyat Allāh* al-Shaykh al-Tustarī, *al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-ḥusayniyya,* ed. al-Sayyid Ja'far al-Ḥusaynī, Beirut: Dār al-Surūr, 1994, p. 37.

VI.2. *Between Ḥusayn and John the Baptist*

In addition to the similarities between Ḥusayn and Jesus, I also found common features between the image of Ḥusayn and that of John the Baptist, known in Islam as the Prophet Yaḥyā. These features are:

a) The mother's pregnancy and the birth: God announced to Zechariah the birth of his son Yaḥyā (Qur. 7:19). The Prophet Muḥammad also announced to his daughter Fāṭima the impending birth of her son Ḥusayn. The pregnancy with John lasted six months, and the same was the case with Ḥusayn.[109]

b) Breastfeeding: Neither Yaḥyā nor Ḥusayn was breast-fed by their mothers. When John was born he was taken to heaven and received food from the rivers of paradise. As to Ḥusayn, he sucked food from his grandfather Muḥammad's thumb.[110]

c) Naming of the newborn: Yaḥyā's name was chosen by God himself: "Oh, Zakariyyā, now we announce you the coming of a son, and his name will be Yaḥyā" (Qur. 5:19). Ḥusayn's name was given to him by the Prophet Muḥammad.

d) Radiant face: John's face illuminated the house, and so too did Ḥusayn's face. Whoever sat in the same room with Ḥusayn saw the light shining from his face.[111]

e) Frequent weeping and weeping of heaven: Ḥusayn as well as John are described as regularly retiring in solitude and weeping. After their death, Heaven wept for them. The sky reddened after Yaḥya's killing as a sign of grief and mourning, and the sun was red when it rose and set. A similar phenomenon occurred after Ḥusayn's killing.[112]

f) The speaking head: The severed head of Yaḥyā speaks to Herod after its decapitation; similarly, Ḥusayn's head speaks to the Calif Yazīd.

Al-Mufīd relates in his book *al-Irshād* a tradition that he heard from Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynā who said: "We went on an expedition with Ḥusayn, and at every place where Ḥusayn camped, he recalled the killing of Yaḥyā and wondered how it happened that the head of Yaḥyā had been offered as a gift to a Hebrew whore". From this tradition it may be inferred that Ḥusayn is described as one who not only

[109] Ibn Namā, *Muthīr*, p. 5.
[110] Ibid., XIV, pp. 180, 198.
[111] Ibid., pp. 187-88.
[112] Ibid., pp. 211, 215- 216.

knew the bitter fate awaiting him, but also knew from the stories of the preceding prophets that his destiny would be like that of Yaḥyā.[113]

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SUMMARY

Authors of maqātil *endeavour to arouse in their readers' hearts a sense of similarity of Ḥusayn 's image with the images of the Prophet and of Ḥusayn's father, 'Alī, Ḥusayn is therefore defined as resembling his father and grandfather in his traits and in his behaviour, in his exterior appearance – his face and his beard, in his way of clothing, and his personal belongings.* Maqātil *authors make use of every possible means to attribute to Ḥusayn the exterior and interior characteristics of his grandfather. They seek thereby to show that Ḥusayn has the same characteristic attributes as his grandfather: his clothing, his garments, his turban, his sword, his horse, and his camel – all these had belonged to his grandfather and passed on to him by legacy. Since prophets and their scions are endowed with special traits, with signs and wonders, so all their belongings and the items they inherited from their ancestors are endowed with particular attributes and supernatural properties.*

Besides, the Shi'ites believe that all objects, belongings, clothing, and arms bequeathed by the prophets to their heirs originate from Paradise. They were owned by the first prophet, Adam, and from him they descended into the hands of the last prophet, Muḥammad. He in turn bequeathed them to 'Alī, and from 'Alī they passed to the succeeding imams. We can therefore understand the excitement of the Umayyad army over Ḥusayn's body, their seeking to plunder his turban, his burnous, his sword, and his armour. They knew indeed that these items were highly valuable.

At the beginning of this article we noted the fasioning of Ḥusayn's image into a saint's image, characterized by the following features: miraculous birth to a virgin mother and predicted by special signs, superior traits throughout his life, and finally, a martyr's death. Authors of maqātil *intend to bestow upon Ḥusayn the attributes of a saint by developing, among other things, a similarity between him and the historic figures of Jesus and of Yaḥyā (John the Baptist). Ḥusayn is like them in his virtues, his powers, his gift to work miracles, and also the tragic fate that befalls him.*

[113] For details, see al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, p. 251.

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The Dreams of *Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī* and His Family in Shīʿite *Maqātil* Literature

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Abstract

The article discusses the dreams that appear in the Shīʿite maqātil *literature, especially the dreams of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī and of his family, as well as those of other persons who accompanied him on his journey from the city of Mecca to Karbalāʾ, where he met his death. The functions that these dreams fulfill are considered, especially the dreams of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī. They show him events that are still to happen, and they reveal his preordained fate being killed in the battle of Karbalāʾ. Each dream is described separately, and classified according to content as a verbal or a symbolic dream, and according to the time and place it occurred. The article attempts to show that the dreams in the* maqātil *literature, like dreams in classical Islamic literature, have the power of showing the future, so much so that at times they may change the course of history.*

Introduction

Ancient people attributed prophetic qualities to dreams, and consequently endeavored to interpret and understand them. It was common to turn to dream interpreters who, through their wisdom, helped explain the positive symbols revealed in the dream or to enable the dreamer to distance himself from imminent danger. The ability to interpret dreams was considered a prophetic quality. The Bible notes that the magicians and wise men

of Egypt[1] interpreted dreams. Later, Moslem priests saw themselves as interpreters of dreams by virtue of their gifts of prophecy.

The ancients differentiated between three types of dreams: nightmares, personal dreams, and vain dreams. The first type were considered worthy of interpretation because they could bear fateful tidings for the individual or the nation. Dreams of private, personal significance did not receive the same attention, and vain dreams were considered inconsequential.[2]

It should be noted that modern, rational man does not dream less, and his dreams are not different in nature from those of the ancients. Moreover, the similarity between our dreams and the creations of ancient peoples — myths — is impressive. Many dreams are similar to ancient myths both in style and content.

In Islamic literature, as in Moslem society, dreams play an distinguished role. This can be seen from the large quantity of literature dealing with dreams. Dreams are common in anthologies of *Ḥadīth*, in the literature of *Sīra*, in biographical, *'Adab* and *Sufî* literature. They appear in the literature of religious law, in commentary on the Qur'ān, and even in religious polemics.[3]

This article will deal with the significance of the dream in Islam based on the dreams of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī and members of his family as they appear in the *Maqātil* — the extensive literature about the murder of Ḥusayn at the Battle of Karbalā'. We will open with a short survey on the nature of dreams in different cultures.

The Dream among Ancient Peoples

In the ancient world the dream was perceived as a channel of revelation, a communications medium between man and divine forces. Through the dream it was believed possible to discover facts capable of influencing reality, and the dream usually bore religious significance. Through dreams the gods revealed their wills to men in the expectation that they would act accordingly.[4]

The ancient Babylonians and Assyrians believed that dreams were caused by a superior force external to man. They believed in the existence of a god who served as the custodian of dreams. According to their understanding, this god was charged with the responsibility of inserting messages into the

[1] Genesis 41:8.
[2] Sheinfeld 1994, pp. 21-22.
[3] For more on the subject see Kinberg, 1977, p.

sleeper's consciousness. Occasionally the superior power was described as an angel or a messenger of other gods.

The Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and their students did not believe that dreams originated with a superior force. They were of the opinion that men's thoughts and feelings constituted the cause of dreams, and that there was a continuum between wakefulness and dreaming. They also agreed that mental clarity could manifest more distinctly during a dream than during wakefulness. At the same time, some of the wise men of Greece believed that dreams were messages sent by the gods. The scholar Galen (201-131 CE), a scientist and physician who believed in the Greek god Asculapius, saw and received instruction from him in dreams. Galen attributed his ability to cure disease and perform dangerous surgery to the knowledge that the god transmitted to him in his dreams.[5]

So strong was ancient man's belief in dreams that one of the Roman Caesars sentenced to death a man who "murdered" him in a dream. Among several Indian tribes it was customary to punish a theft ostensibly committed in a dream, or for treason that took place in a dream.

Anthropologists who studied the cultures of the Ashanti of Ghana and the Maori of New Zealand report attitudes of so much respect and esteem towards dreams that members of these tribes occasionally have difficulty differentiating between dreams and reality. An account is given about an African tribal chief convinced that in a dream he traveled to Europe, and when he woke up he got dressed and prepared for the upcoming journey.[6]

Dreams in the Bible

The Bible devotes many verses to dreams and their interpretations. In the Bible dreams are one of the aspects of prophecy, a channel of revelation. Jacob saw God's angels in a dream while the Lord himself "stood beside him."[7] In the dream he receives a promise and the covenant. The dream also serves as a medium to transmit messages from heaven to earth about the future: "…what God is about to do He hath declared unto Pharaoh."[8]

Notwithstanding, the Biblical attitude towards the dream is equivocal: "If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams …."[9] On one hand a parallel is drawn between the prophet and the dream — the

[5] Sheinfeld 1994, pp. 23-29.
[6] Lincoln, 1970.
[7] Genesis 28:12-13.
[8] Genesis 41:25.
[9] Deuteronomy 13:2

dreamer of dreams is identified explicitly as a prophet. On the other hand, the prophet could be a false prophet and the sign given in the dream nothing but a test: "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, nor unto that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God putteth you to proof …."[10]

Moreover, the Bible emphasizes the difference between dreams and prophecy: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; And he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What hath the straw to do with the wheat? Saith the Lord."[11] There is even complete scorn for the "dreams [that] speak falsely"[12]: "For a dream cometh through a multitude of business; And a fool's voice through a multitude of words."[13] From the parallel we see that the dream is analogous to nonsense.[14]

> And he dreamed yet another dream and told it to his brethren, and said: "Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream: and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me."[15]

One of the best-known dreams in the Bible is Joseph's dream. When the youth Joseph tells his family his dreams they understand immediately the significance embedded in them; they do not need an interpreter. The brothers see in Joseph's dream the youth's boastfulness and ambition, his desire to rule over them — *i.e.* the dream expresses a wish; but at the same time these were prophetic dreams as well, that foretold Joseph's and his brothers' fate. The brothers scorned "this dreamer," and his father rebuked him as well: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? … but his father kept the saying in mind."[16]

Later Joseph gains ascendancy through his ability to interpret dreams. In the dreams of Pharaoh and his ministers, the emphasis is not on fulfillment of repressed wishes but rather on discernment of the future. The wisdom required to interpret dreams is emphasized: "'*We have dreamed a dream and there is none that can interpret it.*' And Joseph said unto them: 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it me, I pray you.'"[17] When Pharaoh dreams, the fact that "all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men"[18] are not able to interpret the dream is emphasized. After Joseph successfully interprets

[10] Deuteronomy, v. 4.
[11] Jeremiah 23:28.
[12] Zechariah 10:2.
[13] Ecclesiastes 5:2.
[14] Levin 1995, pp. 21-23.
[15] Genesis 37:9.
[16] Genesis 37:10-11.
[17] Genesis 40:8.
[18] Genesis 41:8

the dreams and his prophecy comes to pass he is considered *a man in whom the spirit of God is*[19] and attains great honor.

Joseph's dream is also mentioned in the Qur'ān and is given a broad interpretation. When Joseph tells his dream to his father, it is written, "When Joseph said unto his father, 'O my father! Lo! I saw in a dream eleven planets and the sun and the moon. I saw them prostrating themselves unto me.' He said, 'O my dear son: tell not thy brethren of thy vision lest they plot a plot against thee. Lo! Satan is for man an open foe. Thus thy Lord will prefer thee and will teach thee the interpretation of events, and will perfect His grace upon thee and upon the family of Jacob as He perfected it upon the forefathers Abraham and Isaac. Lo! Thy Lord is Knower, wise."[20]

Thus the Qur'ān's interpretation of Joseph's dream is consistent with the above spirit, and adds to it. Jacob sees in his son's dream a sign from Heaven, a prophecy that fulfills itself. Not only does the dream prophesize his fate and the fate of his family; it is also a revelation of God's word, a reinforcement of the covenant between Joseph and the God of his fathers.

We will now move on to the central subject of this article, the perception of the dream in Islam.

The importance of Dreams in Islam

In Islam, the dream is believed to have prophetic authority. One may refer to it for advice and guidance, and he who see the prophet in a dream is considered as if he had seen him while awake. The prophet Muḥammad (born in Mecca in 570 and died in 632) attributed great importance to dreams, seeing in them a channel of communication between man and his God. The supreme forces transmit their wisdom through dreams, and the dreamer is entitled to use their guidance to delegate to others.

Ḥadīth literature is full of dreams of various types. Some *Ḥadīth* anthologies even encourage the dreamer to act upon his dreams and promise him that he will be able to differentiate between a good dream worthy of obedience and its opposite. Thus the prophet Muḥammad said, "If one of you sees a pleasing dream it is sent from Allah; he should thank God for the dream and tell it to others." In this way, use of dreams for the purpose of receiving guidance in life is legitimized, and indeed, there were groups in Islam that used dreams as justifications for their deeds.[21]

[19] Genesis, 38.
[20] Qur'ān, 12:4-6, translated by Pickthall n.d, p. 218.
[21] Kinberg 1991, pp. 223-224.

One can learn about the importance of dreams in Islam *inter alia* from the fact that the instructions for reading the Qur'ān are given in a dream. It is said of several personalities in Islam that they saw the prophet and received from him instruction how to read the Qur'ān, how to pronounce certain vowels, and even how to alter certain verses, in dreams. In some cases God himself is revealed to the dreamer, and in the dream instructs him to read the Qur'ān to Him.[22]

Islamic traditions see in the dream a channel of divine revelation surpassed only by prophecy; since Muḥammad was the last of the prophets, the dream is the only way that Moslems can receive transcendental guidance. In the words of the prophet, "mission and prophecy are concluded; no apostle nor prophet will come after me." When his followers told him, "O Master, and when will the good tidings come (a reference to the promised tidings in *sura* 10:64)[23] he answered them, "the tidings will come in the Moslem dream, which is part of prophecy."

It is interesting to note that this idea has a parallel in the Talmud! Despite the declared opposition of the Talmudic sages to viewing the dream a medium of prophecy and divine inspiration, they ruled, "The dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy."[24]

Moreover, the Talmud states explicitly that after prophecy ceased God was revealed to men in dreams: "The Holy One blessed be He said, 'Though I hid My face from them, I will speak to them in a dream."[25]

According to this approach, dreams can illuminate our way to the truth, bringing us closer to it than would be possible while awake; the dream experience draws us closer to the experience of prophetic revelation. He who is unable to approach the level of prophecy on his own can, through dreams, receive guidance from the prophet. The prophet appears in many dreams, based upon the tradition in which it is said, *man ra'ānī fī al-manām fasayarānī fi al-yaqaẓa 'aw faka'annmā ra'ānī fi al-yaqaẓa* (everyone who sees me in a dream is as if he sees me while he is awake). Moreover, since Satan cannot manifest in the person of the prophet, an appearance of the prophet in a dream is destined to guide the faithful and cannot harm them. The literature of dreams notes that the dream of a God-fearing and righteous man is considered a *manām ṣāliḥ* (good dream).[26]

[22] Kinberg 1991, pp. 225-226.

[23] "Theirs are good tidings in the life of the world and in the hereafter …", *Qur'ān* 10:64 by Pickthall, n.d., p. 198.

[24] Berachot 57 b.

[25] Bavli, Hagigah 5 b.

[26] Kinberg 1977, pp. 11-13. See also Goldziher 1912, pp. 77-79.

Types of Dreams

In Islamic literature, dreams may be classified by categories, as does the scholar Leah Kinberg. She sorts dreams into symbolic dreams and literal dreams.[27]

Kinberg states that there is a vast difference between the two types. Dreams of the former type are vague and mysterious, and in order to understand them one must call upon the help of an interpreter. Sometimes a symbolic dream interprets itself through a divine voice, a *hātif*, which emerges and interprets it. Dreams of this type fall on the boundary between dreams and visions.

In the literal dream there is a clear message, it contains a declaration or conversation — usually between two deceased people or between a living man and a dead man, or though a voice that speaks to the dreamer. On occasion the dreamer receives instructions in the dream, and he can follow them without needing to refer to an interpreter. Sometimes dreams of this type include allegories or abstract ideas embodied in characters that appear in the dream. An ugly woman, for example, might represent distress or disease, while a beautiful woman would represent beauty and goodness. Even in the literal dream some symbols appear, but unlike the symbolic dream they are clear and explicit.

The need to receive guidance in the dream with respect to steps and decisions to be taken while awake led to an understanding that not only was an appearance by the prophet in a dream deemed a good sign, but any appearance of a "guest" from the other world brings a truth that should be taken into consideration. The dream was understood as a type of connection, a meeting between the living and the dead. The faithful believe that the soul of the dreamer rises to heaven and consorts with the souls of the dead, and *vice versa*; the dead might return to the world of the living in order to meet their loved ones. Many stories open with the words, "someone came to me in a dream."

According to this understanding, anyone that appears in a dream comes from the next world, the world of truth, and thus speaks the truth. It is simple to differentiate between the deceptive dream and the true one, as "Satan tends not to appear in dreams." Thus a dream acquired legitimacy as a truth among the Moslems, and meetings with the dead in the dream are perceived as a way to become acquainted with the truth.

[27] Kinberg 1977, pp. 7-8, 11-12. See also: Kinberg 1986, pp. 295.

The Dream in Maqātil Literature

Maqātil is a literary genre describing the manner of the dramatic killing of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī in the year 680 by his Ummayad rivals at Karbalā'. This literary genre first appeared in the eighth century, and is in use to this day. Most *Maqātil* is prose, though poetic rhyme can be found in it.

In addition to the story of the killing of Ḥusayn, *Maqātil* includes such chacracters as angels and demons that offer to assist Ḥusayn, prophets that eulogize him and comfort his family, nature's lamentation for Ḥusayn, and more. *Maqātil* also makes repeated use of expressions and images mostly taken from the battlefield. These elements became typical motifs in Shīʿite *Maqātil* literature.

Among the repeating motifs, a substantial number are dreams. In the *Maqātil Ḥusayn* one can find dozens of dreams appearing in one form or another:

1. The dreams that were dreamed by Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī;
2. The dreams dreamed by his family: Ḥusayn's daughter Sukayna, the prophet's wife 'Umm Salama, Ḥusayn's cousin Muslim Ibn ʿAqīl, the prophet's cousin Ibn ʿAbās, and Ibn ʿAbās's wife Lubāba bint al-Ḥārith.
3. The dreams of people who are not members of Ḥusayn's family: Yazīd's servant girl, the king of Byzantium's messenger to Yazīd, and two sheikhs who were punished in a dream for their part in killing Ḥusayn.

All these dreams play an important part and are of considerable influence in the *Maqātil*. This is especially true of Ḥusayn's dreams, as they prophesize the events about to take place and disclose the fate that awaits him.

Ḥusayn's Dreams

The *Maqātil* describe four dreams that Ḥusayn dreamed. Two of them appear in the *Maqātil 'Abu Mikhnaf*;[28] and the two others in *Maqātil Ibn Tāwūs*[29] and *Maqātil Ibn Namā*.[30] These *Maqātil* were composed between 774 and 1266 at the beginning of the development of Shī ite *Maqātil* literature and constitute a representative sample of this literary genre.

[28] *'Abu Mikhnaf* 1974, pp. 15, 39.
[29] *Ibn Tāwūs* 1929, p. 51

Ḥusayn's four dreams have in common a character from the other world that reveals to Ḥusayn his imminent death. In the first three dreams the character is the prophet; and in the fourth the messenger is a man on horseback.

The first dream was dreamed in Medina where Ḥusayn was visiting his grandfather's grave. In his dream he sees the apostle of Allah standing before him, greeting him and saying to him, "O my son, your father and your mother and your brothers have already joined me, and they are in the Garden of Eden. We all yearn for you; make haste to join us. Know that an exalted position awaits you in the Garden of Eden, and you will be illuminated with the light of Allah. You will be worthy of this exalted position only through a martyr's death."[31]

At the end of the dream the apostle of God says to Ḥusayn, "How soon you will join us!" (*mā'aqrab qudūmaka 'ilaynā*).[32]

The second dream was also dreamed in Medina by the grave of the prophet, when Ḥusayn visited his grandfather before he sent out for Iraq. He fell on the grave and cried bitterly until he fell into a deep sleep, and dreamed that he saw his grandfather Muḥammad, apostle of Allah, who said to him, "O my son, hurry; make haste to join us, for we yearn for you and long to see you" (*al-ʿajal al-ʿajal al-waḥā al-waḥā fabādir 'ilaynā fanaḥnu mushtāqūn 'ilayka*).

In the third dream, which Ḥusayn told to one of his sisters, he dreamed, "a few minutes ago I saw my grandfather Muḥammad, my father ʿAlī, my mother Fāṭima, and my brother Ḥasan, and they told me 'Indeed, Ḥusayn, you will join us soon.'"[33]

The fourth dream differs from the other three in that the image appearing is not the prophet but rather a horseman, who approaches him and says to him and his friends, "You, Ḥusayn, your supporters and your family are walking ahead on on the way, and death is walking and accompanying you" (*ra'aytu fārisan yusūyirunā wayaqūl al-qawmu yasīrūn walmanāyā tasīru maʿahum*).[34] This image is also a harbinger of what is to come.

If we examine Ḥusayn's four dreams we will see that all of them are of the literal type. They are short, simple and clear. There is no need for an interpreter to interpret them. At the same time they are of great importance, falling into the category of prophecy. We will examine some of the elements that appear in these dreams.

[31] *'Abu Mikhnaf* 1971, pp. 15-16.
[32] *'Abu Mikhnaf* 1971, p. 39.
[33] *Ibn Tāwūs* 1929, p. 51.

The Time and Location of the Dream

The place is stated explicitly in the dreams: The first two Ḥusayn dreams in Medina by the grave of his grandfather the prophet; the third is dreamed on the way, at ʿUdhayb al-Hijānāt, and the fourth dream he dreams on the battlefield itself, at Karbalā'.

The time is not specified in three of the four dreams. Only in the second dream is it known that it is dreamt at dawn — an important detail because of the well-known tradition spoken by the prophet: "A dream that appears to the dreamer at dawn is a true dream."[35]

The Appearance of the Prophet in the Dream

In the first three dreams the prophet appears and speaks to Ḥusayn. He tells him how much his family — ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan — yearns for him; announces that he will join them soon; and that an exalted position awaits him in the Garden of Eden enveloped in the light of the Master of the World. He will be worthy of this position only after his martyr's death. The prophet asks Ḥusayn to hurry to join his family in the Garden of Eden.[36]

The prophet is not described in these dreams. We do not know how he looks, what he is wearing or any other detail about him. His only task is to guide and direct Ḥusayn, to help him to take decisions, and to clarify how he must act in order to reach the state destined for him in the Garden of Eden. The prophet also furnishes Ḥusayn with information about his future and his fate. All four of Ḥusayn's dreams are perceived as true. Their purpose is to transmit clearly to Ḥusayn the message that his death is imminent and that he is about to join the family of saints in the Garden of Eden. The dream serves as a tool to convey information about what is about to happen.

We can find another interpretation of Ḥusayn's dreams in the words of Aristotle, Plato's student. In his book *Prophecy in Dreams* he writes that on occasion one may achieve greater clarity of mind in a dream than that which waking thought permits. Aristotle also stressed the continuum between dreaming and wakeful states, a continuum through which dreams can influence waking life. It is possible that Ḥusayn knew in his heart that he was near death, and his mental clarity and the sharpness of his feelings made the dream possible; and for this reason he saw what he saw.

[35] Fahd 1959, pp. 140-142.
[36] Sindawi 2000, p. 158.

History tells us of many instances in which men observed their deaths in dreams. President Lincoln had such an experience. Two days before his murder in 1885 Abraham Lincoln dreamed of his death. He told it to his associates but attributed to it no importance. Two days later the president was murdered in his theatre box.

Muslim Ibn ʿAqīl Ibn ʾAbū Tālib (660-680), Ḥusayn's cousin, also dreamed of the end of the battle, when he received an oath of fealty to Ḥusayn from 18,000 men of Kūfa. When Muslim's act became known to Kūfa's governor, ʿUbaydallah Ibn Ziyād, he sent a pursuit party after him. Muslim fled and hid, and at the time of his flight he dreamed the following dream.

Muslim Ibn ʿAqil's Dream

In the dream Muslim's cousin ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Tālib, the emir of the faithful, appeared to him and said to him: "Make haste, make haste." When he awoke Muslim said, "I have no doubt that my life is at an end."[37]

Muslim Ibn ʿAqīl's dream is very short. This dream is also literal, without symbols. It is totally clear and does not require interpretation. ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Tālib, who appeared to Muslim in his dream, announces to him that in the near future he will join him in the Garden of Eden. Here also the meeting in the dream between the living and the dead fulfills a prophetic role.

The motif of premonition of death appears frequently in the dreams of the members of Ḥusayn's family as well, as it does in the following dream.

ʾUmm Salama's Dream

On the night after Ḥusayn was killed, ʾUmm Salama, the wife of the prophet, saw her husband the prophet in a dream, with signs of dust on his head and beard. She asked him, "Shall I be your ransom (*juʿiltu fidāka*)? What is this dust that I see on your head and beard?" He answered her, "O ʾUmm Salama, I have just returned from burying my son Ḥusayn." ʾUmm Salama said, "I awoke from my sleep with dread, and after a few minutes I heard the sound of a great noise; I asked my servant girl to find out what caused the noise, and when the servant left the house she heard the field eulogizing Ḥusayn.[38]

[37] *ʾAbu Mikhnaf* 1971, p. 32.

[38] *ʾAbu Mikhnaf* 1971, p. 116. See also: *Khawārizm* 1948, p. 94. About ʾUmm Salama's premonition of Ḥusayn's killing, through a handful of dust that the prophet left with her, see the motif of premonition, Sindawi 2000, p. 234.

ʾUmm Salama's dream is short and also belongs to the literal type; she dreamed it in Medina on ʿĀshūrāʾ Day. When ʾUmm Salama awoke from her dream she discovered that Ḥusayn had indeed been killed. In this case the dream came to reveal to the dreamer the death of her grandson Ḥusayn.

Ibn ʿAbbās' Dream

ʿAbdallah Ibn ʿAbbās Ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 687), known as Ibn ʿAbbās, was the prophet's cousin. He dreamed his dream in Medina; in the dream he saw the prophet at noon with his hair wild and tangled, his face gray and the color of dust, holding a bottle of blood in his hand. Ibn ʿAbbās asked him: "What is this blood?" and the prophet answered, "This is the blood of Ḥusayn, I began to collect it starting from today."[39]

When Ibn ʿAbbās awoke he counted the days since he had left Ḥusayn and Hijaz and he realized that Ḥusayn had been killed the same day. This dream is also short and literal, not necessitating consultation with a dream interpreter. The prophet appearing in the dream interprets the story of the bottle and its contents, and announces the future.

Lubāba bint al-Ḥārith's Dream

The purpose of this dream is also to offer information about what is about to happen; this time not about the death of Ḥusayn but rather about his birth:

> Lubāba bint al-Ḥārith, known as ʾUmm al-Faḍl, (d. 650), was the wife of Al-ʿAbbās Ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. She told: "Before the birth of Ḥusayn I dreamed a dream, as if a piece of the flesh of the body of the apostle of Allah was cut off from him and brought to my room." When she awoke Lubāba told the dream to the apostle of Allah and he told her: "If your dream is true, your daughter Fāṭima will bear a son and I will bring him to you to nurse."[40]

This dream is different from its predecessors in that is a symbolic dream. This dream contains symbols that were not at all clear to the dreamer. In order to understand it, Lubāba turned to the prophet, requesting that he explain it to her. In turning to the prophet with a request to interpret the dream Lubāba acknowledges that the prophet is blessed with a special gift to interpret symbolic dreams.

[39] Khawārizm 1948, p. 94.

[40] Ibn Namā 1899, p. 5. The prophet was considered to be the most accurate interpreter of dreams. On the qualities of an accurate dream interpreter, see Kinberg, 1971, p. 8.

Premonition in the Dreams of Ḥusayn

We have seen above that Ḥusayn dreamed his dreams while visiting the grave of his grandfather the prophet Muḥammad in Medina, and as he stood by the grave he saw the prophet and heard from his lips the fate that awaited him. Did Ḥusayn believe the dream? Did he know that he was about to die? The facts of the matter are unclear. Though his foreseen death was shown to him in the dream, when he awoke Ḥusayn declared his intention to go to Iraq, to the very place where he had seen in his dream that he would be killed. He also announced to the crowd that gathered around him that it was decreed that he would die and that the time and place of his death were known to him. At the end of his speech Ḥusayn said, "I see the wolves tearing my limbs from my body at Karbalā'."[41]

On one hand Ḥusayn recognizes that his life will end, and on the other hand he takes no steps to defend himself, nor does he follow the advice of his entourage — his brothers and family members — not to go to Iraq.[42] Moreover, when the angels reveal themselves to him on the way to Iraq — and afterwards demons too — and offer him their help in his war against the Umayyads, he rejects their offers as one who is certain that nothing can alter his fate. When he arrives at Karbalā' he says, "O God, I look here in sadness and at disaster (*karb wa-balā'*), for here will our blood be spilled, here is our burial place, about this place I heard from my grandfather."[43]

Thus Ḥusayn knows that he is about to die. Did he choose to ignore the warnings of his grandfather the prophet and go to the place of danger despite everything because he attributed no importance to his dream? Ḥusayn's faithful followers do not believe so. On the contrary, Ḥusayn accepted with befitting gravity the appearance of his grandfather in the dream but saw in it his fate and purpose. He continued towards Karbalā' and the events that brought about his death not despite the warnings of his grandfather in the dream, but rather because of them.

Dreams of Mourning and Lamentation for the Death of Ḥusayn

Sukayna was Ḥusayn's daughter by his wife Rabāb bint 'Imri'u al-Qays al-Kindiyya. She told this dream to Khalif Yazīd when the convoy of women prisoners arrived at Damascus.

[41] Khawārizm 1948, p. 5. See also, Ibn Namā 1899, p. 30.
[42] *'Abū Mikhnaf* 1971, p. 39.
[43] *'Abu Mikhnaf* 1971, p. 77.

"Know that last night I dreamed a dream. In my dream I saw a palace of light, with balconies built with precious stones of various colors (*shurufatuhu min yāqūt*). Suddenly a door opened, and five sheikhs departed through it, led by a handsome young man (*waṣīf*). I approached him and asked him, 'For whom is this palace?' He answered, "This palace is for your father.' And when I asked about the five sheikhs accompanying him, he answered, 'These are the five prophets: 'Ádam, Nūḥ, 'Ibrāhīm, ʿĪsā and Mūsā, may they rest in peace.'[44]

"During our conversation there suddenly entered a man of gloomy countenance and he was as pale as the moon, as if he carried all the troubles of the world on his shoulders, and he was clutching his beard. I asked the young man, 'Who is this?' He answered, 'this is your grandfather Muḥammad the apostle of Allah.' I drew near to him and said to him, "O Grandfather, our men have already been killed, our babies slaughtered, and the honor of our women violated.' He bent towards me, held me to his breast and wept loudly. Then came the five prophets, 'Ádam, Nūḥ, 'Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, and ʿĪsā, and said to me, 'O daughter of the chosen, please lower your voice, for you are causing anguish to the heart of our lord the apostle of Allah.'

"The young man grasped my hand and drew me into the palace. I saw before me five women, one of them with hair flowing over her shoulders, dressed in black, and in her hand a shirt dipped in blood. When she arose, the other four women rose with her; and when she sat they sat. She poured dirt on her face and head (*taḥthu al-turāb ʿalā raʾsihā*). I asked the young man, 'Who are these women?' and he answered, 'These are Eve, Miriam, Asia the mother of Mūsā, Khadīja [the prophet's first wife], and this woman woman holding the shirt in her hand is your grandmother Fāṭima.'

"I approached her and said, 'O Grandmother, I swear to you that my father was killed and I was orphaned young.' Fāṭima hugged me, and held me close to her breast and said to me, 'I grieve to hear this.' Then Fāṭima burst into tears and asked me many questions: 'O my beloved, who washed Ḥusayn's face, who dressed him in his shroud, who prayed over him, who prepared his body for burial, who carried his coffin on his shoulder, who dug his grave, who covered the grave with dirt, who took upon himself the care of his widows and orphans?' Then Fāṭima called out loudly, 'O my son, my son, O the fruit of my heart.' At that moment all four of the women accompanying her burst into tears. Finally Fāṭima parted from me, weeping. I awoke stunned; the parting from Fāṭima made my pain more acute.'"[45]

[44] *ʾAbu Mikhnaf* 1971, pp. 138-139.

[45] *ʾAbu Mikhnaf* 1971, pp. 139-140. The translation of the dreams into English is taken from the Sindawi's doctoral thesis, *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature*.

Unlike the earlier dreams, Sukayna's dream in Damascus, as told to the Khalif Yazīd is long and detailed. Nevertheless it belongs to the second type of dream, the literal type that does not require consultation with a dream interpreter to understand it. Still, it contains allusions and symbols such as the palace of light — the light of God — and the balconies built of precious stones of many colors; the symbols are interpreted in the dream itself by the handsome young man appearing in the dream and offering explanations for the allusions and symbols that appear in it.

This dream was dreamed after the death of Ḥusayn; thus the motif of premonition is absent. In its place the pain and mourning over the death of the leader are evident. In the following dream as well, the dream of Yazīd's servant girl, lamentations for Ḥusayn are described, and here also the prophets and apostles in the Garden of Eden eulogize him.

The Dream of Yazīd's Servant Girl

Yazīd's servant girl told her master the dream that she dreamed when the convoy of women prisoners arrived at his court together with the dead Ḥusayn's head. She said,

> "In my dream I looked toward heaven and suddenly the gate of heaven opened and I saw a ladder of light stretching from heaven to earth. Two young men without the mark of a beard, dressed in green, descended the ladder; and a carpet of topaz (*zabarjad*) of the precious stones of the Garden of Eden spread out before them. Light flooded the carpet from every direction. Suddenly a man with a round head approached and sat in the center of the carpet and called out 'O Father 'Ádam,' and immediately 'Ádam descended from heaven to earth. Another other called out 'O Father 'Ibrāhīm,' and immediately 'Ibrāhīm descended from heaven to earth. Then he called out 'O Brother 'Īsā' and immediately 'Īsā' descended from heaven to earth. Afterwards I saw a woman standing, unloosening her hair and calling, 'O Mother Eve, come down, O Mother Khadīja come down, O Mother Hāgar come down, O Sister Sara come down, O Sister Miriam come down,' and all of them descended to earth. Then a divine voice said 'This is Fāṭima al-Zahrā', daughter of Muḥammad the chosen, wife of 'Alī the pleased, mother of the lord of the martyrs, who was killed at Karbalā'. Then Fāṭima called out and said, 'O Father, do you see what your people have done to your son Ḥusayn?'[46]
>
> "The apostle of Allah wept and said, 'Do you see what the oppressors have done to my son?' 'Ádam and all those present with him also wept, as did the angels. Afterwards I saw many men surrounding the head and a voice was heard saying, 'Take the master of this house and burn him with fire.' You,

[46] *'Abu Mikhnaf* 1971, p. 135.

> Yazīd, burst out of the house, calling loudly, 'Beware of the fire, beware of the fire, where shall I flee from the fire?'"[47]

As soon as the servant girl finished speaking Yazīd commanded that her head be cut off. It should be noted that at that time it was a prevalent belief that common people did not dream. If a slave dreamed a dream, it was presumed to be a message from his masters; thus it is possible that Yazīd was frightened of his servant's dream, seeing his own fears and guilt revealed in it.

This dream is relatively long, and is of the literal type. Its message and significance are totally clear and an interpreter is not needed to explain it. This dream contains a meeting between the living and the dead, prophets and apostles, and its purpose is to show how much the holy prophets cherished Ḥusayn and how great was their shock when they learned of his death.

Dreams as Punishment and Revenge

Another type of dream is that through which the death of Ḥusayn is avenged: the dreamer gets his just desserts in a dream for the killing of Ḥusayn or for cruelty to him or his family. The dream of sheikh that went blind is of this type.

Ibn Riyāḥ said, "I met a blind man who witnessed the killing of Ḥusayn. When I asked him the reason for his blindness he answered, 'I was one of the ten that participated in killing Ḥusayn but I didn't shoot him, and when Ḥusayn was killed I returned home and said the evening prayer. During my sleep I dreamed a dream, and in my dream a man approached me and told me that the apostle of Allah is calling me and asked me to respond to his call. I asked the man, 'What have I to do with the apostle of Allah?' then he grabbed me by the throat, pulled me by my collar and dragged me to him.

Suddenly I found myself standing opposite the prophet Muḥammad in the midst of the desert, his two arms exposed, the point of a spear in his hand, and an angel standing opposite him held in his hand a sword of fire. The angel had already killed nine of my friends who had participated in the killing of Ḥusayn, and every time that the angel struck, the souls of my nine friends went up in flames.

I approached the apostle of Allah and went down on my knees before him and greeted him, but he did not return my greeting. After that the

[47] *Abu Mikhnaf* 1971, pp. 135-136.

prophet raised his head and said to me, 'O enemy of Allah, you desecrated my honor and killed my family and offspring and did not keep my merit, you have done what you have done.' I answered him, 'I swear by Allah, O apostle of Allah, that I did not strike with the sword and I did not pierce him at all with the spear, and I did not shoot any shot with the bow,' then the prophet answered me, 'You speak truly, but in the battle against my family you increased the number of those wearing black, the dress of mourning (*katharta al-sawād*).'

"Then the prophet commanded me to draw near to him, and when I did so I saw before me a large copper bowl full of blood. The prophet said to me, 'This is the blood of my son Ḥusayn,' and daubed my eyes with the blood in the bowl. When I awoke I discovered that I was blind and I cannot see anything."[48]

The name of the dreamer is not mentioned, and we know only that he is an old sheikh. This dream is intended as a punishment and revenge against the man that participated in the killing of Ḥusayn. It is interesting that the punishment the dreamer observes in his dream is fulfilled when he awakes.

The following is another version of this type of dream.

"An old man stinking of pitch would sit with us. When we asked him for the reason, the old man answered, 'I was among those that deprived Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī of water, and once in my sleep I dreamed a dream in which I saw it was as if the Creator had resurrected all the people and assembled them together. Then I was thirsty and felt a strong urge to drink and asked for water; then suddenly I saw the prophet Muḥammad together with ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, may they rest in peace, standing around a spring (*al-ḥawḍ*). I asked the apostle of Allah for permission to drink and he said to his family, 'let him drink' but none of them responded. Again the apostle of Allah requested that they allow me to drink and again they did not accede to his request, and so it happened a third time.

Then those present said to the prophet, 'O apostle of Allah, the man standing before you requesting to drink water is among a group of men that deprived Ḥusayn of water. The prophet said, 'If so, let him drink pitch.' The old man added, 'From that time until this moment I urinate pitch, and all food that I eat tastes of pitch, and every beverage that I drink reeks of pitch.[49]

This dream also describes a punishment for a man that took part in the killing of Ḥusayn, and here also the punishment that he sees in the dream

[48] *Ibn Tāwūs* 1929, pp. 76-77.
[49] Khawārizm 1948, pp. 103-104.

is fulfilled when he awakens. There are other dreams of this type, in which the dreamer is blinded in the dream and when he wakes up he discovers that he is really blind. It is noteworthy that reward and punishment assured or granted to the dreamer are common in dreams in Islam.[50]

Summary

The ability to reveal the future is attributed to dreams in general and dreams in Islam in particular. Occasionally this power is so strong that it can change the course of history. Some say that before the archduke of Austria Franz Ferdinand departed for Sarajevo in June 1914 one of his courtiers dreamed that the archduke was destined to be murdered there. The dreamer attempted in vain to persuade the archduke to cancel the journey. Had the heir to the throne believed in dreams it is possible that he would not have been murdered, and World War I would not have broken out! Likewise, if Ḥusayn Ibn Aʿlī had listened to the warnings transmitted through his dreams it is possible that he would not have continued on to Karbalā'. As we know, Ḥusayn's murder brought in its wake fierce conflicts between his faction, the Shī ite factionʿ, and the Sunnis responsible for the murder. These conflicts continued for many generations and exist to this day.

The faith and guidance provided in dreams might therefore have altered the development of Islam, upon which the murder of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī had such an enormous impact.

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[50] For more on this subject see Kinberg 1986, pp. 298-301. See also Malti-Douglas 1980, p. 155.

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Ibn Tāwūs, (Raḍiyy al-Dīn Alī Ibn Mūsā)

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The Head of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī From Decapitation to Burial, Its Various Places of Burial, and the Miracles That It Performed

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Abstract

This article discusses the various opinions with respect to the burial place of the head of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī (the prophet Muḥammad's grandson), who was killed at the Battle of Karbalā' (680 A.D.) by the Umayyads. The article also discusses the miracles and wonders performed by Ḥusayn's head after his decapitation. We will attempt to explain why Ḥusayn's head was believed to be buried in various locations. Regarding the miracles performed by the head, the article will show that their purpose is to emphasize Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī status as one of the chosen through whose decapitated head he continued to perform miracles. These miracles prove that in a fashion similar to saints, Ḥusayn's spiritual presence continues even after his material presence has ended.

The Head of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī from Decapitation to Burial, Its Various Place of Burial, and the Miracles it Performed

On the tenth day of *Muḥarram* ('Āshūrā' Day)[1] in the year 61 of the *Hejira* (10.10.680) the Battle of Karbalā' broke out between Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī (the prophet Muḥammad's grandson) and the armies of Caliph Yazīd Ibn Muʿāwiya (ruled 680–683), on the western bank of the Euphrates River. Ḥusayn and many of his family and supporters were slaughtered, and

[1] "The tenth", observed on the tenth of *Muḥarram*. For more details see: Sindawi 2001, pp. 200–214.

Ḥusayn's head was brought to Caliph Yazīd in Damascus along with Ḥusayn's wives and sisters.[2]

Ḥusayn's head was decapitated by Shimr b. Dhī al-Jawshan al-Ḍabābī (d. 686). When the battle ended Shimr stuck Ḥusayn's head on the point of his javelin and gave the javelin to Khawlī b. Yazīd al-'Aṣbaḥī to carry from Karbalā' to Kūfa, to the governor's palace. When the caravan arrived in Kūfa, the head was presented to 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād (d. 686), the district governor, on behalf of Caliph Yazīd.

Subsequently Ibn Ziyād called for 'Umar b. Jābir al-Makhzūmī and ordered him to parade around the city carrying the heads of Ḥusayn and his followers. 'Umar obeyed the governor's order. The following day Ibn Ziyād called for Shimr and Khawlī and ordered them to take 1,500 warriors to present Ḥusayn's head to Caliph Yazīd in Damascus. As they marched through the towns, they were ordered to expose and display the decapitated heads and the prisoners to the towns' inhabitants.

In the towns of Takrīt, Mūṣil, Qarīb al-Da'awāt, Ḥimṣ Ba'albak and Damascus[3] the residents celebrated the news of Ḥusayn's death: they decorated the town gates, waved banners, blew trumpets and gathered in the streets to rejoice for Ḥusayn's death.[4]

In the towns of Qinnisrīn, Shiyzar, Kafr Ṭāb, Saybūr, and Ḥamāh[5] the residents locked the citiy gates and began mourning Ḥusayn's murder, they threw stones at the bearers of Ḥusayn's and the others' heads, and cursed them.

Eventually the head reached the Caliph Yazīd's palace in Damascus and was presented to him set in a golden bowl (in similar fashion to the head of John the Baptist, which was brought to Heron on a golden platter).[6]

[2] For details on the Battle of Karbalā' see, for example: al-Ṭabarī, 3:3–5; 346–1991.

[3] For details on these towns, see for example: Yāqūt 1979, 2: 38–39; 5:223–225; 2: 302–305; 1: 435–455; 2, 463–470.

[4] For more details see, for example: Sindawi 2000, p. 217.

[5] Yāqūt 1979, 4:403–404; 3:383; 4:470; 2:300–301.

[6] It should be noted that the Shī'ite authors stress the connection between between Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī and John the Baptist in order to depict Ḥusayn as a saint. The Shī'ite authors see them both as chosen by God and exemplars of perfection. The Shī'ites believe that Ḥusayn is the successor in the line of prophets, and emphasize the continuity of prophecy for the purpose of trasmission of the *waṣiyya* (heritage), and after the prophets, among the *'imāms* in a continuous dynasty.

The *waṣiyya* was transmitted to the prophets by means of the *'Awṣiyā'* (heirs) of the prophets. According to the Shī'ites, John the Baptist was a prophet.

In my examination of Shī'ite literature, mainly biographies of John the Baptist, I found several lines of similarity between John and Ḥusayn. The authors of the Shī'a were influenced by John's biography, selecting various details of his life story and inserting them into their compositions. They adapted his story to suit their audience, dressing John in Shī'ite Islamic

The sources differ regarding Yazīd's attitude towards the head. Some of the sources note that Yazīd regretted Ḥusayn's murder, while mainly Shīʿite sources note that Yazīd rejoiced at Ḥusayn's death and drank wine over his head.[7]

The Head's Burial Places

While Ḥusayn's body was interred at Karbalā'[8] three days after the battle, there are differences of opinion regarding the burial place of his head. Sources note eight possible cities/locations where his head might be buried. They are:

1. Damascus

Some sources note that Yazīd kept Ḥusayn's head in his weapons stores, and after his death the head was buried in Damascus near the al-Farādīs Gate, today known as *al-Masjid al-Raʾs* ("the mosque of the head").[9] Other sources note that the head remained in the weapons stores until the period of the Umayyad caliph Sulaymān Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (ruled 715-717) and then buried. Some claim that the head was buried in a wall in the governor's palace in Damascus or in the city cemetery.[10]

2. al-Raqqa[11]

According to this version, the head was buried in a mosque in the city of al-Raqqa on the Euphrates. This version notes that Yazīd sent Ḥusayn's head to the 'Āl 'Abū Maʿīṭ tribe, which was related to Caliph ʿUthmān b.

"costume" in order endow Ḥusayn with John's holy characteristics, including his descent from a holy family line. The similarities between John and Ḥusayn are expressed in the following details: their conception and birth, their nursing, the choice of their respective names, their glowing faces, the constant crying and weeping of heaven at their death, the fact that both of their their heads spoke after their decapitations, etc. For more details see: Sindawi 2003, awaiting publication.

[7] Most Shīʿite sources note that Caliph Yazīd rejoiced over the killing of Ḥusayn and that he even recited a poem that quotes from the song of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zibaʿrā (d. 636) expressing joy over the killing of Ḥusayn. For more details see: Ibn Namā 1899, p. 55; 'Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 132; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1950, pp. 102, 104; al-'Aṣfaḥānī 1965, p. 80; al-Qurashī, n.d p. 119. However, historical sources written by the (orthodox) Sunnis note that Yazīd never meant for his men to kill Ḥusayn, behaved honorably towards Ḥusayn's wives, sisters and family members when they arrived at his palace in Damascus, and deeply regretted Ḥusayn's death. For more details see for example: Ibn Taymiyya 1976, p. 17; Ibn Taymiyya 1903, 2:49; compare with Ibn Kathīr n.d, 8:198; Ibn Ṭūlūn 1986, pp. 65–67; al-Hudayb 1995, pp. 69–76.

[8] Ḥusayn's tomb is called *al-Ḥāʾir*.

[9] Ibn al-Jawzī 1995, 4:159; al-ʿAdawī 1956, p. 25; Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī 1943, p. 99.

[10] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1991, 4:71.

[11] A well-known town on the banks of the Euphrates, a three day walk from the city of Ḥarran. For details on the city see Yāqūt 1979, 3:58–60.

ʿAffan, (who ruled from 644 until his murder in 656). Yazīd sent them Ḥusayn's head so that it might appear as if Yazīd was avenging the death of Caliph ʿUthmān. Members of the ʾĀl ʾAbū Maʿīṭ tribe buried Ḥusayn's head in their mosque in al-Raqqa.[12]

3. Karbalāʾ

Many Shīʿite sources note that Ḥusayn's head was returned to Karbalāʾ and buried together with the rest of his body 40 days after he was killed, i.e. on the 20th of the month of *Ṣafar*.[13] Every year on this date the Shīʿites visit Ḥusayn's grave in a ceremony called "The Visit of the Forty"[14] or the *Marrad al-Raʾs* ("visit of the return of head to the body").

4. Madina

According to this version, Caliph Yazīd sent the head to the governor of Madina, ʿAmr b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣṣ (d. 690), who buried it in the Baqīʿ al-Gharqad cemetery[15] next to Ḥusayn's mother Fāṭima, the daughter of the prophet Muḥammad.

In this context Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) says it is reasonable to assume that the head was indeed buried in Madina because during periods of ferment against the government it was customary to return bodies of rebels killed to members of the rebel's tribe. This is what al-Ḥajāj b. Yusif al-Thaqafī (d. 714) did to the body of ʿAbdallāh b. Zubayr (d. 692) after ʿAbdallāh was killed and crucified by the highway.[16]

5. Ḥalab, Syria

This version claims that Ḥusayn's head is buried in Ḥalab on Mt. Jawshan after its return from Damascus.[17]

6. Near the City of Marw[18] in Khurasān

Several sources note that Ḥusayn's head was buried near the city of Marw in Khurasān, at a distance of a *farsakhayn*[19] (about 10 km) and a mosque

[12] Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī 1997, p. 310.

[13] The second month of the Arabic calendar.

[14] On the Visit of the *ʾArbaʿīn* at Ḥusayn's grave, see Ayoub 1985, p. 275. See also: Shubbar 1969, 41:1.

[15] For more details on this cemetery see: Yāqūt 1991, 3:530.

[16] For more details see: Ṭabarī 1991, 3:530.

[17] Ibn al-Shiḥna 1990, p. 78; Mahrān 1990, p. 160; al-Khūʾī 2001, pp. 6–7.

[18] For details on Marw see: Yāqūt 1979, 5:112–116.

[19] A unit of land measure used in Islamic books of law. It is equal to a league of 18,000 feet, or 3½ miles in length, or intervening space between two things. For more details see for example: Lane 1877, 6:2369 (s.v. frs); Hughes 1885, p. 124.

was built above the the head's tomb. The head was brought to Khurasān by ʾAbū Muslim al-Khurasānī (d. 755). After he conquered Damascus he moved the head to Marw.[20]

But the researcher Suʿād Māhir casts doubt on this version, writing that ʾAbū Muslim did not enter Damascus at the time that it was conquered by his troops, and that it is unthinkable that an Abbasid Caliph would permit ʾAbū Muslim to move the head to Marw for burial. She adds, "If any Abbasid caliph reached Ḥusayn's head he would have disclosed the fact to the people so that they would hate the Umayyads even more."[21]

7. Najaf,[22] in Southern Iraq

The author of the book *Mādī al-Najaf waḥāḍiruhā*[23] ("The City of Najaf Past and Present") notes that there is a tradition of the ʾimām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (the sixth Shīʿite ʾimām, d. 765) which tells that Ḥusayn's head is buried in Najaf near the grave of his father ʿAlī, and a mosque was built over the tomb of Ḥusayn's head. The place is called *al-Ghariyyān*[24] ("place of two white domes"). In Suʿād Māhir's opinion this is a weak and unreliable tradition with no basis in the sources.

8. ʿAsqalān[25]

Some of the traditions note that Yazīd commanded his men to march through various towns while carrying Ḥusayn's head until they reached ʿAsqalān, and the city's governor buried it in the city.[26]

The sources do not note when the head was moved to ʿAsqalān or when it was buried, nor do they note the name of the city governor who buried the head.

Muḥammad Zakī ʾIbrāhīm, in his book *Marāqid ʾĀl al-Bayt bialqāhira*, asks why ʿAsqalān, of all cities, was chosen as the burial place of Ḥusayn's

[20] Mahrān 1990, p. 160.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] A city in southern Iraq where Ḥusayn's father ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib is buried. For more details on this city see: Yāqūt 1979, 5:271–272.

[23] This is based upon Suʿād Māhir's quote; for more details see: Māhir 1969, p. 153.

[24] The double form of the word *al-Gharī*. It should be noted that there were two ancient structures in Kūfa also known by the name *al-Ghariyyān* to which this article does not refer. These two buildings were long. The first structure was the tomb of a man called Mālik while the second was the grave of a man called ʿAqīl; both of these men were friends of Judhayma al-ʾAbrash (or al-ʾAbraṣ) (d. 268). The two structures were called *al-Ghariyyān* because the king al-Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir (d. 608) would paint the two structures with the blood of people he killed in his rages. For more details on the subject see: Ibn Manẓūr 1990, 15:122, entry "Ghrw."

[25] For details on the city of ʿAsqalan, see: Yāqūt 1997, 4:122.

[26] Al-Shablanjī 1985, p. 234; al-Harawī 1953, 1:32.

head. At the time this city had neither any concentration of Shīʿite population nor supporters of Ḥusayn.

He adds that it is possible that the head was buried in ʿAsqalān, close to Jerusalem on one hand, and close to the sea shore on the other hand. If the city were ever in danger of foreign conquest it would be possible to remove the head easily and transport it to Shīʿite communities in North Africa by way of the sea to prevent it from falling into enemy hands.[27]

According to Zakī the choice of ʿAsqalān as the location of head's burial place of burial is understandable: ʿAsqalān is an important strategic location — the head could be moved easily if danger of conquest by foreigners loomed.

9. Cairo

Most of the sources which note that Hussein's head was buried in Cairo stress that it was transferred to Cairo from ʿAsqalān during the period of Fāṭimid rule (909–1171).

al-Shaʿranī[28] says that Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab (d. 682) moved her brother's head and buried it in Egypt.

Another opinion holds that the head was moved from ʿAsqalān to Cairo by way of the sea during the period of Fāṭimid rule by Sayf al-Mamlaka with al-Qāḍī al-Muʾtamin b. Miskīn during the reign of Caliph al-Mustanṣir billāh al-ʿAbdī (ruled 1094–1101) on the tenth day of the month of *Jumādā al-ʾĀkhira* in the year 548 of the *Hejira*/1153.[29]

At the same time, al-Maqrīzī (d. 1441) notes that the head arrived on the 18th of *Jumādā al-ʾĀkhira* (Sept. 18, 1153) of the same year, and adds that the head was moved from ʿAsqalān to Egypt by the governor of ʿAsqalān, who was called Tamīm.[30]

The manuscript *Tārīkh ʾĀmid* by Ibn al-ʾAwraq in the British Museum (No. 5803) notes that Ḥusayn's head was moved from ʿAsqalān to Egypt in the year 549 of the *Hejira*/1154.

In his book *al-ʾIshāra ʾilā Maʿrifat al-Ziyārāt,* al-Harawī notes that the head was moved to Cairo after Palestine was conquered by the Crusaders, in the year 549 of the *Hejira* (1154), but some claim that the head was moved to Cairo before the Crusader conquest of Palestine.

The Fāṭimids, upon witnessing the Crusader conquest of Syria and parts of Palestine, feared for the fate of Ḥusayn's head.

[27] ʾIbrāhīm 1986, p. 33.
[28] Al-Khūʾī 2001, pp. 6–7.
[29] Al-Shablanjī 1985, p. 234.
[30] Al-Maqrīzī 1988, 2:328.

During the period of rule of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Fā'iz ('Abū al-Qāsim ʿĪsā al-Fā'iz binaṣrallāh (ruled 1149–1154) one of his officers, an Armenian convert to Islam called al-Ṣāliḥ b. Ruzzayk, (d. 1163)[31] built a mosque which he called *Jāmiʿ al- Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'iʿ* (near the gate called Bāb Zuwayla) in Cairo in 1160, where Ḥusayn's head was to have been buried after it arrived from ʿAsqalān.

He sent a delegation to bring the head. The head was moved from ʿAsqalān quickly and not buried in the mosque designated for the purpose, but was buried instead in the large rear cellar (al-Ṣirdāb al-Khalfī al-'Aʿẓam) in the palace of al-Zumurrud, and a year later was moved to another burial place, which stands today at the entrance to the Khān al-Khalīlī quarter.[32]

In the opinion of the researcher Lapidas, the Fāṭimid purpose in moving Ḥusayn's head was to raise Cairo's status as a pilgrimage destination (to Ḥusayn's head) as well as to strengthen Shīʿite faith during the 12th century.

We should not forget that the Fāṭimid state was Shīʿite 'Ismāʿīlī state, and there was competition between the 'Ismāʿīlī and Imāmiyya factions. The Imāmiyya saw Karbalā' as the important religious center and the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's grave as more important than the pilgrimage to the Kaʿba. Perhaps during the period of the Fāṭimid state the Ismailis hoped to compete with the city of Karbalā' and convert Cairo into a pilgrimage site to the head of Ḥusayn.

Miracles Performed by Ḥusayn's Head during its Travels

The principal miracles associated with Ḥusayn's head are its ability to speak and to influence events taking place near it. Ḥusayn's head usually spoke during the night — and sometimes all night — until the break of dawn. The first time the head spoke, at the entrance to the city of Kūfa,[33] it called out verses from the Qur'ān from the story of the cave "*Surat al-Kahf*" and the verse was heard, "Or deemest thou that the companions of the cave and the inscription are a wonder among our portents?"[34]

It spoke for the second time in the house of Khawlī b. Yazīd al-'Aṣbaḥī who kept the head overnight. A voice was heard in the night calling verses from the chapter of the poets, but the verse that was heard clearly was the

[31] On his life, see: Badawī 1960, pp. 1–27.
[32] Lapidas 1988, pp. 216–217.
[33] Khawārizim 1948, pp. 109–110.
[34] Qur'ān, 18:9.

following: "Those who do wrong will come to know by what a (great) reverse they will be over-turned."[35]

On the third occasion, the head spoke in the home of a Jewish rabbi in the city of Qinnisrīn, and conducted a conversation with him. The rabbi requested of Ḥusayn's head that his grandfather Muḥammad intercede on his behalf on Judgment Day.

The aim of the authors who wrote about these miracles was to prove that even after his death Ḥusayn's spirit remained intact and poweful; and although he no longer had a body, his spirit hovered about, maintaining a continuing presence on earth and working miracles after his death.

Traditions About Miracles That Took Place Near the Head

1. The Tradition of the Pillar of Light

The tradition of the pillar of light tells that a pillar descended from heaven to Ḥusayn's head when he was in Kūfa and in Damascus.[36]

It should be noted that the motif of prophetic light is very common in religious literature in general, including Shī'ite *Qiṣaṣ al-'Anbiyā'* literature. Thus, for example, the light of Muḥam-mad shone on Seth's face, and it is told that a pillar of light shone from the head of Ḥūd when he was in his infancy. Shī'ite sources relate stories about the light of Adam that glowed on Seth's forehead. They also tell of a pillar of light that appeared when Abraham was born, which caused the angels to marvel.[37]

2. The Miracle of the Hand

A tradition relates that during journey of the caravan carrying the head and the female prisoners, when the caravan stopped to rest on the way from Kūfa to Damascus a hand appeared and carved the words of the following song with a pen of iron on one of the roof beams of the monastery:

"How can you ask the nation who killed Ḥusayn whose grandfather was Muḥammad to plead on behalf of the people on Judgment Day?"

The hand usually appeared near Ḥusayn's head.[38]

[35] Qur'ān, 23:227.

[36] 'Abū Mikhnaf 1971, pp. 107, 124–125; Khawārizim 1948, pp. 123–124; Ibn Namā; 1899, p. 40.

[37] For more details see: Rubin 1975, pp. 62–119.

[38] Ibn Namā 1899, p. 52; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1951, p. 98.

3. The Miracle of Turning the Dirhams to Clay and Black Stones

A tradition relates that on the way to Damascus, the same caravan stopped near a monk's cell. The monk saw Ḥusayn's head and paid a sum of 10,000 dirhams to the bearers of the head in exchange for allowing him to keep the head during the night. When the head's bearers woke in the morning they discovered that the dirhams they had received from the monk were clay and black stones with verses from the Qur'ān written on them.[39]

4. The Story of Ibn Luhayʿa

Ibn Luhayʿa was one of the delegation that carried Ḥusayn's head and the other heads to Damascus. He testifies that on the way they stopped to rest, drinking wine until they became drunk, leaving Ḥusayn's head in a closet. The same night Ibn Luhayʿa heard thunder and saw lightning and suddenly was astounded to see the gates of heaven open and the prophets descending to earth. The first to reach earth were Adam, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Muḥammad. After them came the angels 'Isrāfīl, al-Karūbiyyūn, al-Rūḥaniyyūn, and al-Muqarrabūn. They all assembled near the head, comforting the prophet Muḥammad and asking him to grant his permission to avenge Ḥusayn's blood. The prophet refused their request because he himself will judge Ḥusayn's killers on the day of the resurrection.[40]

5. The Story of the Servant who Carried Ḥusayn's Head Over His Head from ʿAsqalān to Cairo

The writer Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-'Ayyūbī, known as al-Malik al-Nāṣir (ruled 1169-1193) heard of a servant who had held an important position under the previous ruler, and who knew where he had hidden his treasures.

This servant was brought before the ruler Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and was interrogated as to the location of the treasure, but the servant refused to reveal its location. The ruler became angry and ordered him punished. The officer of punishments took the servant away, cut his hair, shaved his head, placed beetles on his head and tied them down. This was the harshest possible punishment, since a man punished in this way could not endure the beetles because they would make holes in his head until the victim died.

The officer of punishments repeated this procedure a number of times but the servant did not suffer any pain and the beetles kept dying. The officer of punishments wondered and said to the servant, I am sure that there

[39] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1991, 4:67.
[40] Ibn Ṭāwūs 1951, p. 98; Khawārizim 1948, p. 88.

is some secret here; you must reveal it to me. The servant answered: My head is protected because I bore the head of Ḥusayn from ʿAsqalān to Cairo on my head; it seems that Ḥusayn is protecting my head. Then the officer of punishments forgave the servant and freed him.[41]

Summary

Why are there a number of sites where Ḥusayn's head was buried? Ḥusayn was the grandson of the prophet, and he bestowed importance upon and sanctified the site; as the site is sanctified by the presence of the saint.

In my opinion there are several reasons:

1. The security aspect: The presence of the head at locations that are sensitive for reasons of defense promoted population growth at these locations. People were attracted to a grave housing the head of the prophet Muḥammad's grandson Ḥusayn; thus the burial place of the head attracted permanent settlement, which promoted population growth in areas considered to be sensitive and requiring defense. (Another example of this phenomenon is the city of Mazārī al-Sharīf in Afghanistan.)

2. The religious aspect, via the religious importance of the locations where it is claimed that Ḥusayn's head is buried: it became possible to unite people around a religious ideal in the person of the holy Ḥusayn whose head was buried there. People received from him emanations of righteousness, honesty and respect for others between man and man, and between man and God. Thus one can understand the competition among various cities for the honor of being the burial place of the head, as we saw (for example, between Karbalā' and Cairo). The place where the head was buried becomes holy by virtue of the presence of the holy relic.

3. A reason acceptable to modern sensibilities is the desire to promote economic development among the residents of the various sites where Ḥusayn's head is buried. The tomb of the head attracted many pilgrims, who made the journey in order to enjoy the blessing of the tomb and its relic. These holy sites drew large population centers around them.

Regarding the Miracles Performed by Ḥusayn's Head

Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī was the third 'imām after his father ʿAlī and his son Ḥasan. In Shīʿa the 'imāms are deemed to have a rapport with the early

[41] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir 1996, pp. 30–31.

prophets.[42] In this context the Shīʿites see the ʾimāms as links in the eternal dynasty of the chosen who appear continuously in the world since the days of Adam, a dynasty which continued down to Muḥammad, the last of the prophets, and after him through to the ʾimāms. The ʾimāms were worthy of the status of prophets, and were able to perform miracles in order to prove their status as ʾimāms to those who refuse to vow loyalty to the ʾimām and to recognize their obligation of *wilāya*.

The tendency of Shīʿite hagiography is not different in principle from any other hagiographic literature: as the material presence of the ʾimāms receded from the lives of the faithful, the religious experience and their marvelous and sublime abilities became more powerful in their eyes.

The miracles performed by Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī's head come to stress Ḥusayn's worthiness as an ʾimām, who, like saints, maintains his power even in the absence of his body, as his spirit remains hovering among the faithful on earth after his death, and he continues to perform miracles after his death.

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[42] See for example Amir-Moezzi 1944, pp. 99–115.

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The Cult of the Euphrates and Its Significance among the Imāmī Shīʿa*[0]

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The act of purification in the waters of the Euphrates is one of the ceremonies of the pilgrimage to the tomb of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī[1] (killed in 61/680) in Karbalāʾ,[2] in particular on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ,[3] but also on other holidays[4] and even on regular weekdays. This act of purification in the river is

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*) [0]) This is an expanded version of a paper given at the annual conference in memory of Prof. David Semah at Haifa University (June 3, 2003) held under the patronage of the Dept. of Arabic Language and Literature. I am indebted to the kindness of Prof. George Kanazi for his helpful comments on this article. The paper will discuss the cult of th Euphrates in Shīʿī religious prose literature. The cult of the Euphrates in Shīʿī poetry will be discussed in a separate paper in future.

[1]) For whom see L. Veccia Vaglieri, art. "al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib" in *EI*², III (Leiden, 1986), 607–15.

[2]) For details on Karbalāʾ see E. Honigmann, art. "Karbalāʾ" in *EI*², IV (Leiden, 1990), 637–39.

[3]) For details on ʿĀshūrāʾ, see my article "ʿĀshūrāʾ Day and Yom Kippur," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 38 (2001), 200–11; M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (The Hague, 1978).

[4]) The Shīʿīs make pilgrimages to Ḥusayn's grave every day of the year, but the important pilgrimages are: 1) the pilgrimage of the middle of the month of Shaʿbān; 2) the pilgrimage of the middle of the month of Rajab called *al-Ghafīla*; 3) the pilgrimage of the three last nights of the month of Ramadan, *Layāli l-Qadr* ("The Nights of the Decree"); 4) the pilgrimage of the two holidays of al-Fiṭr and ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā, the celebration of breaking the fast and the celebration of the sacrifice; 5) the pilgrimage of on *ʿArafa* Day (the ninth day of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja; 6) the pilgrimage of ʿĀshūrāʾ on the tenth of Muḥarram, remembrance day for the killing of Ḥusayn. This pilgrimage is the most important of the pilgrimages we have noted; 7) the pilgrimage of Arabaʿīn (this pilgrimage takes place on the 20th day of Ṣafar every year; that is, forty days after ʿĀshūrāʾ, the day on which the head of Ḥusayn was returned from Damascus to Karbalāʾ and was buried beside his body. This is the origin of the pilgrimage's other name, *"Maradd al-Raʾs"* ["the pilgrim-

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the most important part of the pilgrimage ceremony, one that is performed by every visitor to Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's tomb, in imitation of the Shīʿī Imāms and in response to their preachings, in particular those of the sixth Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq[5] (d. 148/765). The believers maintain that this immersion is conductive to health and purity, in addition to other virtues to be discussed below.

Many pilgrims to Ḥusayn's tomb put water from the Euphrates into flasks they have brought with them, and take it back to their homes in far-away lands as a remedy for illnesses of every kind and a charm that is sure to bring success and longevity. Some pour the water over their fields and orchards in order to bless them. Others used to sprinkle the water on their camels and/or horses on their way to and from the tomb.

In this paper I shall attempt to delineate the essence, the sources and the developmental stages of this cult among Imāmī Shīʿīs, which has become the main ceremony among the pilgrimage rites connected with Ḥusayn's tomb.

Water in Other Religions

The Shīʿī cult of the waters of the Euphrates is one of the many forms that the sanctification of water and of water sources takes in various religions around the world, pagan as well as monotheistic. The reason for this is that sources of water (springs, rivers, bountiful rain) are perceived as what makes life possible and thus as expressing eternity, longevity, creative energy, renovation, physical and spiritual purification, fertility, and the renewal of life.[6] The adoration that the Euphrates River has received, and the sanctity ascribed to it, should therefore come as no surprise.

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age of the Return of the Head (to the body for burial together).] See Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī al-Tabrīzī (Najaf, 1937), 184–85; ʿAbbās al-Qummi, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* (Beirut, 1995) 474–504.

[5]) For whom see M. G. S. Hodgson, art. *"Djaʿfar al-Ṣādiḳ"* in *EI²*, II (Leiden, 1991), 374–75.

[6]) Eliade draws this conclusion based upon his important comparative study of various myths of ancient cultures. For details see M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London, 1958), 188; J. Rudhard, art. "Water" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, XV (1995), 350–58.

In pagan religions the god is described as hovering over the water that gives birth to both gods and men.[7] And as mentioned above, water plays an important role in the monotheistic religions as well. Thus in the Biblical story of the Creation it is said that: "… the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters … And God said Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water … God called the expanse 'sky'",[8] following which He made the land appear out of the water. In a similar vein many verses in the Qur'ān relate that God created all living things from water, and that His throne used to hover over the water.[9]

A widespread belief ascribes to water the power to purify the body of uncleanliness and the soul of sin. This is why water is so often used in various religious ceremonies of all faiths. Ritual immersion in water was of particular significance among members of certain Jewish sects toward the end of the Second Temple period.

In the Christian religion baptism, initially in the River Jordan and later also using water that had been blessed in a special sacrament, absolves the believer of Original Sin and symbolizes his or her official acceptance into the Church as a member of the Christian community. This act, performed with water, the sacred substance in which Jesus was baptized, traces Christ's path of death and rebirth and all that this implies.[10] Jesus' very first disciples already considered baptism one of their most important rites.

Christianity absorbed a number of pagan rites and sites connected with water deities whose statues and/or temples had been erected in the vicinity of water sources,[11] and these were then assimilated into the rites of Christianity. France, for example, possesses a large number of water sources that were sacred to the ancient pagan religions and that later be-

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[7]) As in the religions of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, and Hindus. For details see Eliade, *Patterns*, 189–91; M. Gaster, art. "Water" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, XI (1951), 713.

[8]) Genesis, I:2.

[9]) Qur'ān LXXXVI, 6; XXV, 54; XXIV, 45; XXI, 30; XI, 7.

[10]) Eliade, *Patterns*, 196–97. It should be noted that for Paul, baptism is a symbol of the believer's death and rebirth. Likewise, it should be noted that the baptism of infants for ritual purposes is known outside of Christianity as well; for example among the Indians of Mexico.

[11]) For details on river deities see M. Gaster, art. "Water" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, XI (1951), 704–19; *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. Eliade), 425–28 art. "River".

came Christianized. This was the case with the spring of Saint Sauveur in the Forest and Lake Andéol in the Aubrac Mountains.[12]

The British Isles also possess numerous natural wells that were considered sacred in antiquity; to this day they still attract pilgrims wishing to take advantage of their supposed therapeutic properties. Some of these sites have been adopted by the Church, which duly modified the rites conducted there and turned them into Christian places of worship.[13]

Of particular interest is the spring at Lourdes, in the Pyrenees of south-western France, whose story began in July 1858, when a girl named Bernadette claimed to have had a revelation of the Virgin by the spring. In 1862 the Roman Catholic Church declared her vision genuine; the spring was sanctified and its waters declared to possess therapeutic properties. As a result the place became a pilgrimage site visited by three million people annually, including invalids and other ill people who wished to immerse themselves in the healing waters.[14] In 1876 a church was constructed at the site for the believers.

From the earliest times man has evolved water ceremonies that played an important role both for himself and for his deities. In primitive times religious ceremonies were frequently held next to the sources of flowing water that ensured human survival, and that served as proof of the life-giving, dynamic, purifying and renewing force of water. Such water sources were at times even granted an independent religious status, with their own ceremonies unconnected to the main articles of faith of the religion in question.[15]

The inhabitants of India consider the River Ganges holy. Every Indian aspires to reach the river and immerse himself in it at least once, preferably toward the end of his or her life. Immersion in the river provides purification of the soul, and is conducted in four stages: first, external purification of the body, achieved by washing in the river; second, internal purification of the soul, produced by drinking river water, of which a symbolic amount of three spoonfuls is enough; third, a stage of personal

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[12]) Eliade brings many additional examples of water sources in France, Sardinia, Sicily and other places that were sanctified by Christianity and continued the tradition, sometimes by converting them to official, institutionalized cultic sites. For details see Eliade, *Patterns*, 200–201.

[13]) On the subject of holy springs and wells of the British Isles, see M. Freeman, *Sacred Waters, Holy Wells* (Parabola, 1995).

[14]) Lourdes: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, III (1979), 352.

[15]) G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. J. E. Turner (London, 1938), 60.

communion with the gods through meditation, repetition of mantras and pranayama (breathing exercises); fourth, asking the waters of the river to serve as the family godhead. The most auspicious time for performing the immersion is dawn; when the energy of the day is united with the energy of the night, a strong combined energy thus supports the bather.[16]

The ancient Babylonians ceremoniously bathed the statue of the god Tammuz (something the Greeks did as well), in a belief that this act increased the power of the gods responsible for agriculture, fertility and rainfall. Water, the primary source of life, was thus of greater importance than the gods themselves.[17]

The Origins of the Name "Euphrates"

The Arabic name of the river, al-Furāt, is originally an adjective meaning "sweetest water". The word appears in the Qurʾān: "This sea, palatable, sweet *(furāt)* …".[18] The associated verb is *faruta* (imperfect: *yafrutu*) *al-māʾ*. Water that has become sweet is called *furāt*, "which is also the name of a famous river in the city of l-Kūfa in Iraq" which is how the lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr defines the word.[19]

In Akkadian the word *furāt* means water that has been driven back.[20]

Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, compiler of the *Muʿjam al-buldān*, a geographical encyclopedia, has this to say in his entry *furāt*: "The word has been arabicized from the Persian, in which it has a synonym, which means 'next to', since it is located next to the River Tigris". Yāqūt adds that the word in Arabic means "the sweetest water", adducing the above-mentioned Qurʾānic verse as evidence. He then goes on to describe the river's course, from its sources in Armenia down to its mouth in the Persian Gulf or, as he calls it, the Indian Sea. The river is 1480 miles (2330 km) long.[21]

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16) Raghubir Singh, *The Ganges* (New York, 1992); S. B. Chaphekar and G. N. Mhatre, *Human Impact on the Ganga River Ecosystem* (New Delhi, 1986). Also, http:///web.bryant.edu/~langlois/ecology/gangeshistory.htm.

17) Van der Leeuw, *Religion*, 195–97.

18) Qurʾān XXV, 53.

19) Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab* (Beirut, 1995), s. v. "f.r.t"

20) Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nichols Postgate eds., *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 279.

21) R. Hartman, art. "al-Furāt" in *EI*^{2}, II (Leiden, 1991) 946; Kamal Murīs Sharbil, *al-Mawsūʿa al-jughrafiyya i-l-waṭan al-ʿarabī* (Beirut, 1988), 406.

Following these philological and geographical comments, Yāqūt, pursuing a practice common among Arab geographers, goes on to list the virtues of the river. The Euphrates is said to have many meritorious characteristics. It is claimed to be one of the four rivers emanating from the Garden of Eden, the other three being the Nile, Sīḥūn and Jīhūn. The caliph ʿAlī is quoted as saying: "Oh, people of al-Kūfa, your river (i.e. the Euphrates) has water coming from two spouts from the Garden of Eden that flow in it". In the name of ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿUmayr it is related that the Euphrates is one of the rivers of the Garden of Eden, and had it not been contaminated by evil people any ill person bathing in it would be healed by God. The river is protected from disease by a guardian angel from the Garden of Eden.

It is related of the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir[22] (d. 114/732), the fifth Imām, that he drank water from the Euphrates, asking people to give him more and more, and then he praised God, saying: "The River Euphrates is greatly blessed. If people only knew how blessed it was they would construct domes on either bank and live in them, and if it were not for the unrighteous who immersed themselves in its water, any invalid washing in it would be healed".

In the name of al-Suddī[23] it is related that during the reign of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[24] (r. 36–41/656–61) the river rose and from its swelling water a large pomegranate merged and cut the bridge. The people took the pomegranate and opened it. The caliph then ordered the Muslims to share the pomegranate's seeds among themselves. The pomegranate was considered as having come from Paradise.

Yāqūt has this to say about the tradition: "This is a false tradition, since the fruits of the Garden of Eden are never to be found on earth". He then adds: "I have seen this tradition quoted in a number of books by scholars; otherwise I would not have permitted myself to quote it".[25]

One tradition quoted by Muslim claims: "The Day of Judgment will not come before the River Euphrates reveals a mountain made of gold over which the people will quarrel and all 199 men will come together to

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[22]) For whom see E. Kohlberg, art. "Muhammad b. ʿAlī Zayn al-Abidīn" in *EI²*, VII (Leiden, 1993), 397–400.

[23]) For whom see Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī* (Mashhad, 1348/1929), 214 no. 1189; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī* (Qumm, 1415/1994), 124 n. 1247.

[24]) For whom see H. A. R. Gibb, art. "Alī b. Abī Ṭālib" in *EI²*, I (Leiden, 1986), 381–86.

[25]) Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut, 1979), IV, 242.

Alī b. ʾAbī ʿṬālib, and each will say to him: 'I shall be the one to possess this mountain'".[26]

From these traditions it is clear that the Euphrates was considered to be a river with many virtues: it originates in the Garden of Eden, its water has the power to heal the ill and the crippled, and God cast a pomegranate from the Garden of Eden into it (the latter tradition having been rejected by Yāqūt).

The Shīʿīs further developed these virtues, adding new ones as well. They raised the status of the river and that of its water, so much so that the water of the Euphrates was deemed to be equal, if not superior, in sanctity to that of Zamzam[27] (a sacred well near Mecca).

The Sanctity of Euphrates among the Imāmī Shīʿa

It would appear that the beginnings of the river's sanctity among Shīʿīs goes back to the period following the death of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in the year 661 at the hands of the Umayyads in the battle of Karbalāʾ and his burial there, near the stream of the Euphrates in southern Iraq. The Shīʿa thus came to regard the soil of Karbalāʾ as sacred, following the sadness and pain (*karb wa-balāʾ*, a play on the toponym Karbalāʾ) that they had experienced there.[28] Works were composed describing that event and the battle that preceded it.[29] In addition, since Karbalāʾ became a pil-

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[26]) Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-miʿtār fī akhbār al-aqṭār*, ed. Ihsān ʿAbbās, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1984), 439.

[27]) For more on Zamzam see Ahmad Ghabin, "The Zamzam Ceremony and Its Importance in Islam", in Nahem Ilan, ed., *The Intertwined Worlds of Islam: Essays in Memory of Hava Lazarus-Yafe* (Jerusalem, 2002), 114–48 (in Hebrew). See also B. Carra de Vaux, art., "Zamzam" in *El²*, IV (1978), 1212–23; G. R. Hawting, "The Disappearance and Rediscovery of Zamzam and the Well of the Kaʿba," *BSOAS* 43 (1980), 44–54; Sāʿid Bakdāsh, *Faḍl mā' Zamzam*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1994).

[28]) George Kanāzīʿ, "Karbalāʾ in Shīʿite Literature", *Al-Karmil* 13 (1993), 179–94. See also Ibn Babawayhi al-Qummī (Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn), *al-Amālī aw al-Majālis*, 5th ed. (Beirut, 1990), 111; Muḥammad Karīm Khān al-Karamānī, *Risāla fī l-maqtal* (Keraman, n.d.), 182; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 4th ed. (Beirut, 1404/1983), XLIV, 284.

[29]) The compositions are called *maqātil*. On the development of *maqātil* literature, see my doctoral dissertation: Khalid Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, Ph. D. Thesis, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 2000 (in Hebrew); See also Sebastian Günther, "Maqātil Literature in Medieval Islam," *JAL* 25 (1994), 192–212.

grimage site, works concerning the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb were written, dealing with the ceremonies conducted there.[30] The Euphrates plays an important role in these ceremonies: every pilgrim must purify himself before beginning the *ziyāra* rites at the tomb.

We should point out that according to Islamic tradition Ḥusayn was prevented by the Umayyad soldiers from drinking water from the Euphrates and was killed in a state of thirst. Although he begged his enemies to enable him to drink, they prevented him from doing so and mocked him, telling him that he would die of thirst and taste the pain of a slow death.[31]

After Ḥusayn's death the Euphrates gradually took on an increasing importance among Shīʿīs, who ascribed to it many virtues, in general and in comparison to other rivers. Among these virtues are the following: it is one of the four earthly rivers emanating from the Garden of Eden; it is a believing river, in contrast to the Tigris, which is an unbeliever; its water can cure any disease; and if its water is mixed with soil from Karbalāʾ the resulting mud is a cure for any disease.[32] Shīʿī sources contain also, in addition to the details of the river's virtues, tales of miracles related to both Alī and the Euphrates, which will be discussed below.

The Euphrates and the Zamzam Well

For the Shīʿa Karbalāʾ is of great importance as a place of pilgrimage. The site is visited at various times, similarly to the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, the Shīʿī Imāms, and in particular the sixth Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, claim that the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb in Karbalāʾ is worth a thousand pilgrimages to Mecca. Karbalāʾ thus enjoys a status superior to that of city of the Kaʿba.[33] And if next to the Kaʿba there is a well, Zamzam, next to Karbalāʾ one finds the Euphrates River, the many virtues of

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[30]) For example, see al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān), *Kitāb al-mazār* (Qumm, 1413/1992); Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārāt al-Ḥusayn*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm, n.d.).

[31]) Abū Mikhnaf (Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, ed. ʿUmar Abū l-Naṣr (Beirut, 1971), 94. It should be noted that Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's thirst and his being prevented from drinking water became a motif in Shīʿī *maqātil* literature. For details on this motif, see Sindawi, *Maqātil*, 211–14.

[32]) See, for example, al-Shajarī, *Faḍl*, 89–90; al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ*, 507–508.

[33]) See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVIII, 110.

which exceed those of the former. The Shīʿīs explain this by means of the following story:

One day the waters of Zamzam boasted that they were the best and most excellent on earth. This made God angry. He turned the formerly sweet water brackish and granted the status that Zamzam previously enjoyed to the Euphrates. That is why the literature concerning the virtues of Zamzam contains descriptions very similar, in content as well as in form, to works describing the virtues of the Euphrates.

In a tradition ascribed to the Imām al-Bāqir, he is quoted as saying:

> God created the land of Karbalāʾ 24,000 years before He created the Kaʿba. He made it into a sacred territory, the sanctity of which existed before the creation of man and will continue to exist until God will make it into the preferred place in Paradise and the preferred abode where God will cause the righteous to dwell in Paradise.[34]

Elsewhere al-Ṣādiq is quoted as saying: "Four areas made noise in the days of the Flood. They are: al-Bayt al-maʿmūr,[35] so God raised it, al-Ghariyy,[36] Karbalāʾ and Ṭūs."[37] From this tradition we may conclude that the Shīʿīs ascribe to Karbalāʾ a status equal to that of the Kaʿba, al-Ghariyy, the burial site of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and Tūs, the burial place of the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍa (d. 203/818), all of which have become holy sites for the Shīʿa.

However, Karbalāʾ is considered particularly sacred because it is on its soil that the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn was killed so dramatically and ruthlessly. In order to provide legitimacy for this belief of theirs, the Shīʿīs went back many centuries in time, to claim that Karbalāʾ and its environs had been sacred land ever since the Creation, and that it was the area preferred by God Himself, which He will eventually turn into Paradise, into the abode of His saints. It is the place whence God spoke to Noah, and there he and his sons were saved from the deluge; there God also spoke with Moses (Mūsā); prophets and angels have been gathering

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[34]) *Ibid.*

[35]) "The Inhabited House": A house in the seventh heaven visited by Muḥammad during the Miʿrāj or night-journey. It is said to be located immediately above the sacred temple at Mecca. See Thomas Patrick Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam* (New York, 1885), 35.

[36]) For details on al-Ghariyy see Muḥammad ʿAlī Jaʿfar al-Tamīmī, *Mashhad al-Imām aw madināt al-Najaf* (Najaf, 1955), I, 61–62; Ghiyāth al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Tāwūs, *Farḥat al-Ghariy fī taʿyīn qabr Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib fī l-Najaf* (Qumm, n. d.), 15–17.

[37]) On Ṭū, see C. E. Bosworth, art. "Ṭūs" in *EI*², X (2000), 740.

there since ancient times to mourn over Ḥusayn.[38] Another tradition has al-Ṣādiq saying: "Karbalāʾ and the water of the Euphrates are the first place on the earth that God sanctified and blessed".[39] From this tradition it follows that the sanctification of the Euphrates takes precedence over that of Zamzam. Yet another tradition quotes al-Ṣādiq as saying:

> God, the Blessed and Exalted, preferred some places to others on the earth, and preferred some waters over others on the earth. Some of these places and waters boasted and others did wrong. God punished any water and any land that were not humble. God sent to the Kaʿba the polytheists[40] as punishment, and made the waters of the Zamzam Well salty and unpalatable. But Karbalāʾ and the water of the Euphrates River were the first land and the first waters on the face of the earth that God blessed and sanctified. God said to Karbalāʾ: "Speak about how God preferred you". So the soil of Karbalāʾ and the water of the Euphrates River spoke as follows while other lands and waters boasted about each other. Said Karbalāʾ: "I am God's sacred and blessed land. Healing is to be found in my soil and my water. I do not boast of this. I am humble and subservient and do God's will. I do not gloat before those of less status than myself, but thank God." Then God honored it and increased its status, because it had thanked God for the fact that Ḥusayn would be killed on its soil and buried in its earth together with his men. Abū Abd Allāh (i.e. al-Ṣādiq) adds: "Whosoever shows humility and subservience to God, God raises his status; and whosoever demonstrates pride, God lowers his status".[41]

According to this tradition God initially preferred the Kaʿba over all other places on earth, and the water of Zamzam over all other waters on earth. However, after the Kaʿba and Zamzam boasted God sent the polytheists to the former and made the latter's water salty. As punishment for their pride God transferred the Kaʿba's former status to Karbalāʾ and that of the water of Zamzam to the water of the Euphrates River. These were thus rewarded for their humility and granted virtues exceeding even those of the Kaʿba and Zamzam.

The virtues of Zamzam and its water, as well as the metaphors used to describe it, have in fact often been transferred to the Euphrates.

It would thus appear that the Shīʿī writers compete with the Sunnīs, expressing their preference for the Euphrates over the Zamzam Well for

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[38]) Kanāzīʿ, "Karbalāʾ", 186–7; Akhṭab Khawārizim (al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Makkī), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* (Najaf, 1948), 17.

[39]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVIII, 110.

[40]) On "Shirk" in Islam see D. Gimaret, art. "Shirk" in *EI*^{2} (Leiden, 1997), 484–86; M. I. Surty, *The Qurʾānic Concept of al-Shirk (Polytheism)* (London, 1982).

[41]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVIII, 110.

the purpose of uniting the Shīʿīs around the river and the sacred tombs in its vicinity. Another motive for turning the Euphrates into a holy site is economic interest. After all, the pilgrims who come to visit the tombs and immerse themselves in the river need lodging, food, drink and transportation. Supplying all these needs contributes to the area's economic development.

A further tradition quotes al-Ṣādiq as saying: "Whoever comes to the tomb of Ḥusayn on the day of ʿArafa[42] (the ninth day of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja, on which the pilgrims to Mecca camp at Mt. ʿArafāt, one of the stations on the pilgrims' way), washes in the water of the Euphrates and then goes to the tomb, God gives him for every single step the recompense of having made the pilgrimage to Mecca".[43] In another version of this tradition it is claimed that the recompense is equal to that of someone who participates in the war of the Muslims against the non-Muslims.[44] Here al-Ṣādiq makes the claim that the water of the Euphrates is pure and holy and that pilgrims to the tomb should immerse themselves in it in order to receive their recompense, which for every step they take is equal to the recompense given someone making the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Still another tradition has al-Ṣādiq claiming that anyone visiting Ḥusayn's tomb and bathing in the river sheds all his sins and becomes as innocent as on the day of his birth.[45] A tradition quoting the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍa[46] maintains that whoever visits Ḥusayn's tomb on the bank of the Euphrates is considered as having visited God sitting on His throne.[47] This tradition in fact places Karbalāʾ and the Euphrates on the same level as the seventh heaven, where the Divine Throne is located.[48] It is as if they were an integral part of heaven itself. Recall also that we previously saw that the Euphrates is considered to be one of the four rivers of the Garden of Eden that are located on earth. The purpose of these traditions is to demonstrate that the sanctity of the Euphrates stems from its having been chosen as such by God.

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[42]) About him see A. J. Wensinck, art. "Arafa" in *EI*², I (Leiden, 1986), 604.

[43]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVIII, 90.

[44]) *Ibid.*, XCVIII, 85.

[45]) *Ibid.*, XCVIII, 90.

[46]) For whom see B. Lewis, art. "Alī al-Riḍa" in *EI*², I (Leiden, 1986), 399–400.

[47]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVIII, 85.

[48]) On the throne see J. Berque, art. "Arsh" in *EI*², I (Leiden, 1986) 509; ʿAbsī Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-ʿarsh* (Beirut, 1990); C. L. Hurat, J. Sadan, art. "Kursī" in *EI*², V (Leiden, 1986), 661.

Miracles Associated with the Euphrates[49]

Shīʿī writers mention three miracles with connections to the Euphrates. These are: the river's embarrassment when forced to flow over Ḥusayn's tomb; the drop in the water level on the orders of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib; the suicide of Ḥusayn's steed in the river. Each of these miracles casts valuable light on the status of the Euphrates.

The river's Embarrassment When Forced to Flow over Ḥusayn's Tomb

One of the strangest tales connected with the Euphrates is the embarrassment its waters felt when the caliph al-Mutawakkil[50] (r. 233–47/847–61), who was anti-Shīʿī, ordered his men to divert the river's current in the direction of Ḥusayn's tomb and then, in 850, further ordered that the tomb and all the surrounding buildings be destroyed and that the entire area be plowed under and put to agricultural use. He also forbade visitation to the tomb.[51] In fact, the commissioner of police in the area published the following announcement: "Whosoever is caught by Ḥusayn's tomb will be sent to the al-Miṭbaq[52] prison in Baghdad". As a result the people refrained from going there and the tomb and the surrounding area was plowed under and put to agricultural use.[53] Medieval Muslim historians relate that the water of the river refused to flow over the tomb, out of embarrassment *(ḥārat al-miyāh)*, from which one of the

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[49]) The Shīʿi attitude towards the *muʿjiza* is unique in that the Shīʿa ascribes the ability to perform *muʿjizāt* to Imāms as well as to prophets. For details see M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shīʿism: The sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David David Streight (New York, 1994), 91; al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Awāʾil al-maqalāt fī l-madhāhib wa-l-mukhtārāt* (Tabriz, 1371/1951), 40–41, trans. M. J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd* (Beirut, 1978), 112.

[50]) For whom see H. Kennedy, art. "al-Mutawakkil ʿAlā Allāh" in *EI²*, VII (Leiden, 1993), 777–78.

[51]) Jalāl al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūti, *Tārīkh al-khulafāʾ* (Beirut, 1997), 407.

[52]) The prison was built by the second ʿAbbāsid caliph, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (ruled 754–75 C. E.), between the two city walls of Baghdad. For details see ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Jūmard, *Ḥārūn al-Rashīd: ḥaqāʾiq ʿan ʿahdihi wa-khilāfatihi* (Beirut, 1999), 242; ʿAbū al-Shālijī, *Mawsuʿat al-ʿadhāb* (Beirut, n.d.), III, 115.

[53]) Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk* (Beirut, 1988), V, 312.

names of Ḥusayn's tomb al-Ḥāʾir ("the embarrassed"), is derived. When the water reached the tomb it stopped, divided and flowed around it, so that it was not inundated. The name al-Ḥāʾir[54] for the tomb is in use to this day.[55]

In this tradition the water of the Euphrates performs a miracle by being embarrassed and refusing to flow over Ḥusayn's tomb. The reason for this may be that the Euphrates is considered a sacred river, one of the rivers of Paradise on earth. On the other hand, it may be that the composers of this tradition wanted to say that God mobilized nature – the Euphrates in this case – in order to protest the wrong that was done to the tomb of Ḥusayn, one of the most virtuous of men.

The Drop in the Water Level on the Orders of ʿAlī

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd in his book *al-Irshād* quotes a tradition passed down by transmitters of traditions relating the following miracle that occurred to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib:

> One day the water in the imposing[56] Euphrates rose and inundated the entire area. The people were frightened and in their confusion they came to the Prince of the Believers, may he rest in peace. Then ʿAlī rode on the mule[57] of the Messenger of God (may the prayers of Allāh be on him and on his family) and the people came with him until he reached the bank of the Euphrates. Then ʿAlī, may he rest in peace, went down to the river, bathed in its water and prayed alone, while the people gazed at him in wonder. Then he called out so that all heard, stepped toward the river leaning on his stick, struck the water and said: "May the level of your water drop, with Allāh's permission and will". The water level dropped suddenly until the fish at the river's bottom could be seen. The fish greeted ʿAlī ...[58]

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[54]) The grave of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī has other names as well. They are: *Saḥn al-Ḥusayn, Ḥaram al-Ḥusayn, Jāmiʿ al-Ḥusayn, Masjid al-Ḥusayn, al-Rawḍat al-Ḥusayniyya*, and *al-Ḥaḍra al-Ḥusayniyya*. For details see ʿAbd al-Jawād al-Kalīdār, *Tārīkh Karbalāʾ wa-ḥāʾir al-Ḥusayn* (Najaf, 1418/1997), 73.

[55]) al-Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, IV, 312.

[56]) It is worth noting that the Euphrates *(Furāt)* River is named after the regions through which it flows such as: Furāt al-Kūfa, Furāt al-Karbalāʾ, etc.

[57]) Apparently the reference here is to the prophet Muḥammad's mule, called al-Shahbāʾ, and also al-Duldul. For details see ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā bi-aḥwāl al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādi ʿAṬĀ (Beirut, 1988), 591.

[58]) al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān), *al-Irshād*, 3rd. ed. (Beirut, 1989), 20; al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarsī, *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā*, 3rd ed. (Qumm, 1390/1970), 179.

In this tradition it is ʿAlī who performs the miracle. At first he bathes in the Euphrates, and then, after he prays, he calls out and strikes the water with his stick. The water level immediately drops, as happened to Moses, who smote the Red Sea, which then split and enabled himself and his people to escape from Pharaoh. The Shīʿī writers thus create a link between ʿAlī and Moses, both of whom are considered exceptional people capable of performing miracles. Moses is a prophet whereas ʿAlī is a *waṣī* (inheritor), the Prophet's heir and an Imām with a prophet-like ability to perform miracles.[59] It is no coincidence that ʿAlī performs this miracle on the Euphrates, a believing, sacred and pure river greatly revered by the Shīʿa. The first greet ʿAlī, who understands what they say. For ʿAlī understood the language of animals,[60] like King Solomon.

The Suicide of Ḥusayn's Steed in the River[61]

After Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī was killed in the battle of Karbalāʾ:

> His horse wandered around neighing and examining the bodies of the dead one by one, until it reached the body of Ḥusayn. Then it began to dip its head in the blood, striking the earth with its front hooves and neighing so loudly that it was heard in the nearby desert. The commander of the Umayyad army, ʿUmar b. Saʿd (d. 67/686) asked that the horse be brought to him. His men went to catch it, but the horse resisted. It kicked with its front and back legs in protest, killing many of the Umayyad men and horses. When ʿUmar b. Saʿd saw that he could not be caught he shouted to his soldiers: "Leave it

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[59]) On the similarity of the characteristics between the prophet and the Imām, and especially the miracles that they perform, see for example: M. M. Asher, "The Qurʾān Commentary Ascribed to Imām Ḥasan al-Askarī", *JSAI* 24 (2000), 366–68; and on the knowledge of the Imām, equal to the knowledge of the Prophet, see Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrūkh al-Saffār al-Qummī, *Basāʾr al-darajāt fī faḍāʾil āl Muḥammad* (Tabriz, 1380/1960), 109 no. 2. Likewise, it should be noted that there is no difference between performance of miracles by Imāms and prophets. For details see Judith Loebenstein, "Miracles in Sīʿī Thought: A Case Study of the Miracle attributed to Imām Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq," *Arabica* 2 (2003), 242.

[60]) On the popular levels of the Shiʿa, ʿAlī (like the rest of the Shīʿī Imāms) is fluent in all languages, including the languages of the animals and plants, just as are the prophets. For details see Loebenstein, "Miracles in Sīʿī Thought," 217–18, 233–34; Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide*, 93; al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Awāʾil*, 93.

[61]) Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 48.

> alone. Let us see what it intends to do". Ḥusayn's horse then went into the women's tent and informed them that his rider was killed. The horse wept tearfully like a human being. Then it left the women's tent, went to the Euphrates, threw itself in the river and took its own life.[62]

Abū Mikhnaf (Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā, d. 158/774),[63] a historian who composed a book about the killing of Ḥusayn *(Maqtal al-Ḥusayn)*, wrote there this horse will appear again at the end of time together with the Mahdī,[64] with Ḥusayn riding on its back.[65] This tradition is mentioned by no one except Abū Mikhnaf, and would thus appear to have been invented by him, or by someone else who ascribed it to him.

The purpose of this tradition is to demonstrate that the horse of the Messenger of God fights alongside its master and behaves like a human being: it brings the news of the death of Ḥusayn to the women's tent, commits suicide in the river and disappears. It will spend the interval of its death *(barzakh)*[66] until the resurrection in the Euphrates, and will be revived together with Ḥusayn at the end of time *(ākhir al-zamān)*, when Ḥusayn will ride it again in his war against his enemies, similarly to the "beast of the earth" *(dābbat al-arḍ)*[67] on which the Mahdī (the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who disappeared in Sāmarrāʾ, some 100 kilometers north of Baghdad, in 261/874) will ride after his return *(rajʿa)* to this world to bring the message of redemption, punish the enemies of the Shīʿa, and "fill the land with justice just as before it was filled with iniquity."

In this tradition the Euphrates River serves as a refuge in which Ḥusayn's horse spends his *barzakh* interval, waiting for its resurrection at the End of Time. It is as if the horse purposely picked this river to throw itself into, out of an awareness of its sanctity and value, and as if it knew

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62) *Ibid*.

63) For whom see H.A.R. Gibb, art. "Abū Mikhnaf" in *EI²*, I (Leiden, 1986), 140; Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḫnaf* (Leiden, 1977); Sindawi, "The Maqātil", 59–68.

64) The Mahdī in Twelver Shīʿism is th twelfth Imām, who vanished in Samarrāʾ in 874. He is known as Muḥammad al-Ḥujja or *al-Muntaẓar* or *al-Qāʾim*, or *Ṣāḥib al-Zamā*n. For details about him see J. G. J. Ter Haar, art. "Muḥammad al-Ḳāʾim" in *EI²*, VII (Leiden, 1993), 443; J. M. Hussain, *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam: A Historical Background* (London, 1982); A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shīʿism* (Albany, 1981).

65) Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 48.

66) For details about him see B. Carra De Vaux, art. "Barzakh" in *EI²*, I (Leiden, 1986), 1071–72.

67) For details see A. Abel, art. "Dābba" in *EI²*, II (Leiden, 1991), 71.

that it would provide it with sanctuary until it was resurrected together with its master, Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī.

The Virtues of the Euphrates River in Shīʿī Literature

Ibn Qulawayh dedicated the thirteenth chapter of his *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* to the virtues of the Euphrates, drinking its water and bathing in it as part of the rites of pilgrimage to the tomb of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī.[68] Among these virtues is the fact that it is one of the rivers of the Garden of Eden, as are the Nile, Sīḥān and Jīḥān.[69] The Euphrates is thus a sacred river, chosen by God.

When asked about this by one of his supporters, al-Ṣādiq sais: "God created one of His Paradises in the west, and the waters of our Euphrates emanate from that one …"[70]

The water of the Euphrates is master of the waters of this world and the next one. It can heal all manner of diseases and the Shīʿī believers bathe in it for this purpose. Every night an angel descends, carrying with it three measures of the musk of Paradise, which it throws into the river.[71]

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[68]) It should be noted that every Shīʿī believer makes a pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's grave. Purification in the waters of the Euphrates is a prerequisite for the pilgrimage ceremony. The immersion completes the pilgrim's purification. For details see Qummī, *Mafātīḥ*, 474; al-Shajarī, *Faḍl*, 79.

[69]) Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil*, 47, 49; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XLVII, 37; al-Mirzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il* (Qumm, 1408/1987), X, 227–28, XVII, 25–26; Ibn Babayhi al-Qummī (Muḥammad b. ʿAlī), *al-Khiṣāl*, 2nd ed. (Qumm, 1403/1982), II, 625; Ḥasan b. Shuʿba al-Ḥarranī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, (Qumm, 1403/1982), 113. Most Shīʿī traditions mention the names of the four rivers of the world that originate in Paradise. They are the Nile, the Euphrates, the Sīḥūn (located in India) and the Jīḥūn (in the Balkh region of Khurāsān. For details see al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, XVII, 26. Other traditions add to the list the Tigris see *ibid.*, X, 227. It should be noted that there is some uncertainty in Shīʿī tradition regarding the names of the rivers Sīḥūn and Jīḥūn. Some of the traditions mistakenly refer to them as Sīḥān and Jīḥān. For details see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, LVII, 35. 47, 254. al-Majlisī comments on this and notes that the two names are two different rivers, the Sīḥūn and Jīḥūn being larger rivers.

[70]) It should be noted that the Shīʿī Imāms refer to the Euphrates when it is owned by the Shīʿa by making use of the suffix of affinity "ī". For details see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XXV, 371; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, 400.

[71]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, VI, 289; LVIII, 51; Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 4th ed. (Tehran, 1365/1945), III, 246.

Every day seven drops from Paradise fall into the Euphrates, in whose course flow two waterspouts from Paradise.[72] Every new-born child whose gums are rubbed with Euphrates water[73] becomes a supporter of the *Ahl al-bayt*.[74] In this connection it is told that when the eighth Imām, Alī al-Riḍa, was born in the city of Medina, his father the seventh Imām, Mūsā al-Kāẓim[75] (d. 183/799), rubbed his gums with water from the far-off Euphrates. In the opinion of al-Arbillī the Imām al-Kāẓim may have kept some Euphrates water in his home as a charm, or he may perhaps have miraculously caused water from the Euphrates to appear in his home immediately after his son's birth. Al-Arbillī adds that one should not wonder at this, since Imāms are capable of performing miracles anytime, anywhere.[76]

On the matter of the Euphrates' creation Shīʿī literature explains that God sent the angel Gabriel with orders to scratch eight rivers on the earth with his thumb. One of these rivers is the Euphrates.[77]

Another virtue of the Euphrates is that it is a believing river, as is the Nile. God sanctified and blessed it, and its water heals. The water of the Euphrates and the soil of Karbalāʾ spoke together and said that God preferred them to other places and granted them superior virtues and status because of their humility. God thanked the water of the Euphrates and made it taste sweet. The Euphrates and the soil of Krbalāʾ are safe, sacred and blessed, and were so already 24,000 years before God created the

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[72]) al-Mufīd, *al-Mazār*, 15, 17; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (Muḥammad, b. al-Ḥasan b. Alī), *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa* (Qumm, 1409/1988), iV, 14; XXV, 268; Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil*, 49; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, XVII, 22; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVII, 230; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 4th ed. (Tehran, AH 1365), VI, 38.

[73]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVII, 230; XCIX, 244; Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil*, 49; al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān), *al-Muqniʿa* (Qumm, 1433/1922), 521.

[74]) For details on *Ahl al-Bayt* see M. Sharon, "*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House," *JSAI* 8 (1986), 69–184.

[75]) For whom see E. Kohlberg, art. "Mūsa al-Kāẓim" in *EI*², VII (Leiden, 1993), 645–48.

[76]) ʿAlī b. ʿĪsī al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī maʿrifat al-aʾimma* (Tabriz, 1381/1961), II, 298.

[77]) The other rivers are: the Sīḥān and Jīḥān in the area of Balkh, al-Khushuʿ in the area of Shāsh, Mihrān in India, the Nile in Egypt, and the Tigris and the Euphrates in Iraq. For details see Majlisī, *Biḥār*, LVII, 73, Ibn Babawayhi al-Qummī, *Khiṣal*, I, 291; al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, IX, 430; Ibn Babawayhi al-Qummī (Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn), *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, 3rd ed. (Qumm, 1413/1888), II, 45.

Kaʿba and the water of Zamzam. On the Day of Judgment the earth will shudder, but God will raise Karbalāʾ and the Euphrates up to become an inseparable part of Paradise, where they will shine like the stars, with a light that will swamp the eyes of those looking at them in Paradise.[78]

Whoever bathes in the Euphrates and then walks over to Ḥusayn's tomb will receive with every step a recompense from God that is equal to that of a pilgrimage to Mecca.[79] Whoever does not bathe in the Euphrates will never be blessed.[80] Some traditions link the sanctity of the Euphrates to the prophet Noah. One tradition claims that Noah's ark anchored at the Euphrates after the deluge because of its sanctity.[81]

According to Shīʿī literature the dowry brought by the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ[82] (d. 12/633) when she married ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib consisted of one-fifth of this world, a third of Paradise and four earthly rivers: the Euphrates, the Nile, Nahrawān and Balakh.[83]

Such popular elements in the veneration of the Euphrates are attacked by the well-known anti-Shīʿī modern Iraqi scholar al-Sāmarrāʾī, who had this to say about the fact that the Shīʿīs considered the Euphrates more sacred than Zamzam: "This is nothing but heresy by which the Shīʿīs are trying to turn pilgrims away from Mecca and the water of Zamzam in favor of Karbalāʾ and the water of the Euphrates, for the purpose of destroying the Muslim religion".[84]

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[78]) al-Mufīd, *Mazār*, 34–35; al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, X, 403; al-Ḥusayn al-Buraqī al-Najafī, *al-Durra al-bahiyya fī faḍl Karbalāʾ wa-turbatihā al-dhakiyya*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥāshimī al-Khaṭṭāb (Najaf, n.d.), 11–12.

[79]) al-Shajarī, *Faḍl*, 79.

[80]) al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, V, 259; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, II, 523; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XCVII, 227; XCVII, 401.

[81]) al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XI, 333; XCVII, 381; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, III, 401; Muḥammad b. Masʿūd b. ʿAyāshī, *Tafsīr al-Ayāshī*, Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥāllatī (Tehran, 1830/1960), II, 146, 149. Here the purpose of the Shīʿa is to emphasize that the Euphrates and its environs in southern Iraq has been a holy place since the days of the prophet Noah. In this way the Shīʿīs strive to legitimize their belief that the Euphrates has been a holy river since ancient times.

[82]) For whom see L. Veccia Vaglieri, art. "Fāṭima" in *EI*^{2}, X (Leiden, 1999), 841–50.

[83]) al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, XVII, 25; XIV, 241; Muḥammad b. Shahrā Shūb al-Mazandarānī, *al-Manāqib* (Qumm, 1379/1959), III, 351; Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī, *Dālāʾil al-imāma* (Qumm, 1383/1963), 18.

[84]) ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Rāfiḍa wa-tafḍīl ziyārat qabr al-Ḥusayn ʿalā ḥajj bayt Allāh* (XXXX, 1991), 6.

The Euphrates in Imāmī Shīʿī Qurʾānic Exegesis

Among Shīʿī exegetes and jurists the common, and perhaps most effective, method for the establishment of a belief or rite that are not mentioned explicitly in the Qurʾān is to find some hint of it in the Islamic scripture, since it is taken to be the undoubted word of God. However, it is quite difficult to apply this method for matters which have no mention at all in the Qurʾān, in which case considerable talents of exegesis and analogy have to be brought to bear.

In this respect the Euphrates presents a complex problem, since the exegetes were aware that, on the one hand, one could not depend on the sayings of the Imāms as the sole authority on which to base the rite, but that, on the other hand, it was difficult to point to any certain hint in the Qurʾān. It would appear that they feared lest this silence concerning the Euphrates undermine the belief on which they were based, forcing them to rely on *ḥadīth* in order to explain Qurʾānic verses that supposedly referred to the Euphrates. In other words, the process whereby the veneration of the Euphrates was adopted by the Shīʿa began with the *ḥadīth*, not the Qurʾān.

Using this method, most Shīʿī exegetes came to the conclusion that the Qurʾān does indeed contain hints concerning the Euphrates and the rites associated with it. Two verses in particular are held by Shīʿīs to refer to the Euphrates. One is the verse: "And we made the son of Mary and his mother a portent, and we gave them refuge on a height, a place of flocks *(qarār)* and water-springs *(maʿīn)*",[85] and the second: "And when he reached it, he was called from the right side of the valley *(wādī)* in the blessed field, from the tree: O Moses! Lo! I, even I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds".[86]

In the first verse God speaks about Mary and her son Jesus and the fact that He found a safe place for them that is high and has water. Shīʿī exegetes have provided many different explanations as to the identity of this place, including the city of al-Ramla, Damascus, Egypt, the Temple of Jerusalem, and the city of al-Ḥīra in Iraq. The word *qarār* in this verse has been taken to refer to the mosque of al-Kūfa, not to "flocks", with the word *maʿīn* being explained as referring to one particular source of water, the Euphrates.[87]

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[85]) Qurʾān XXIII, 50, English trans. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qurʾān* (New York, 2000), 314.

[86]) Qurʾān XXVIII, 30; Pickthall, *Meaning*, 384.

[87]) al-Faḍl b. Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1995), VII, 192–93.

While other explanations have also been offered, what interests us here is the fact that the Shīʿī exegetes explained the word *maʿīn* as referring to the Euphrates, on whose bank God found a refuge for Mary and Jesus near sweet waters. In other words, the sweet waters of the Euphrates river are holy, and are meant for special, chosen people.

In contrast, Sunnī (orthodox) exegetes interpret the word *maʿīn* as referring to a river in Damascus or as having the meaning of "running water".[88] They make no mention at all of the Euphrates, thus providing evidence for the claim made at the beginning of this paper, that Shīʿī commentators purposely sought an interpretation of the Qurʾānic text in which the Euphrates River could be inserted so as to confirm its status as a sacred river.

Concerning the second verse al-Ṣādiq says[89] that the word *wādī* ("valley") refers to the Euphrates.[90] This interpretation is unsupported by any other Shīʿī exegesis, but clearly al-Ṣādiq tries here to give the word a meaning that would enable him to claim a status of sanctity for the river.

It may be worth pointing out here that Imāmī Shīʿīs insist that the Qurʾān is full of references to Shīʿī doctrine, its history, its articles of faith and its holy places. However, since in most cases the text contains no explicit references, Shīʿī exegetes have had to overcome this obstacle. This they did in one of three ways. First of all, they claimed that it is the Qurʾān's way to only hint at things, and that it is the task of the exegete to expose their true meaning; secondly, they claimed that the existing Qurʾānic text has been falsified by purposely deleting references to the Shīʿīs and their faith; thirdly, they claimed that the Qurʾān teaches only the principles, leaving the details to tradition.[91]

To conclude, although the Qurʾān does not refer explicitly to the Euphrates River, it may be claimed to hint at it, if we accept the Shīʿī interpretation of the two verses adduced above. Shīʿī exegetes thus claimed to

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88) Ibn Kathīr, for example, interprets the word as "as fountain of flowing water." See Ibn Kathīr, ʿImād al-Dīn ʾIsmāʿīl, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm* (Cairo, n. d.), III, 388; Abū Ṭāhir b. Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzabādī, *Tanwīr al-miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās* (Cairo, n. d.), 326.

89) It should be noted that in the māmī commentary tradition not every one has the authority to interpret the Qurʾān; this authority is the exclusive preverse of ʿAlī and his Imām descendants. For details see Meir M. Bar-Asher, "Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shīʿism", Ph. D. thesis (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1991), 89–94 (in Hebrew).

90) Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil*, 49.

91) Bar-Asher, *Issues*, 87–89.

have demonstrated the originality of the Shīʿī faith, which they believed to go back to very early times. Their approach is consistent with the fact that as far as we know the Euphrates was not a cult site in pagan times.

Conclusion

Throughout the preceding discussion we have stressed the popular and legendary motifs constituting the major part of the discussion about the developing sanctity of the Euphrates. The Euphrates gradually became sacred after Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī was killed and buried nearby. Its sanctity may have been affected by Jewish and/or Christian or Indian tales.

The Shīʿīs assimilated these tales and then used them for their own purposes. This did not prevent the continued existence and further development of additional popular and legendary motifs, which in the end caused the Euphrates to become the object of unofficial veneration, which it maintains to this day among Imāmī Shʿīs, for whom these motifs represent a historical truth no different than any other fact of history. Today scarcely any objection to the cult of the Euphrates can be discerned, perhaps out of fear lest this could lead to doubts concerning other stories accepted by Shīʿīs, such as Noah's pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb, the pilgrimage of the angels to the same tomb, etc. Furthermore, the whole affair is an important part of Shīʿī history and contributes to an understanding of more general issues going beyond the matter of the Euphrates itself, such as how the area of Karbalāʾ and Najaf became holy for the Shīʿīs at an early stage.

The traditions cited throughout this paper are of course not uncontroversial, and their authenticity has been seriously doubted. But that is a matter for a different discussion, since here our concern is with the development of popular spiritual tradition. Most of these traditions have become so accepted among Shīʿīs and have been quoted so often that they have in fact become an integral part of Shīʿī beliefs to this very day.

VISIT TO THE TOMB OF AL-ḤUSAYN B. ʿALĪ IN SHIITE POETRY: FIRST TO FIFTH CENTURIES AH (8TH-11TH CENTURIES CE)

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Abstract

The present study concerns visiting the tomb of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (d. 680 CE) in Karbalāʾ, as reflected in Shiite poetry written between the first and fifth centuries AH. The article opens with a description of the visit, the ceremonies it involves, the virtues and purposes attributed to it, as well as the motivation behind the poetry associated with it. The study then describes the characteristics of this "visit poetry," its language and its artistic structure.

Introduction

Among Shiites the death of Ḥusayn b. Alī,[1] his companions and relatives, in the battle of Karbalāʾ[2] in the year 680 CE, and the removal of his severed head, are fraught with emotional connotations. The day of his death, ʿĀshūrāʾ,[3] the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram, is commemorated as an annual day of public mourning to this day.

Public displays of mourning took the form of wailing and crying, reinforced by elegiac poems or a narration of this or that unfortunate event during the battle of Karbalāʾ. As a consequence, Shiite imams have called on the faithful to visit the tomb of Ḥusayn and to recite poems in his memory. Numerous traditions in fact urge the faithful to go on pilgrimage and call on poets to recite verses about him. In the present study, I shall examine how the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb is reflected in Shiite poetry from the

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[1] For details, see: L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abū Ṭālib," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [3:607-615].

[2] For details, see: E. Honigmann, "Karbalāʾ," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [4:637-639].

[3] For details, see: Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Shajarī, *Kitāb al-ʾahālī* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-kutub, Cairo: Maktabat al-Mutanabbī, 1970), 2:80-88; Khalid Sindawi, "'Āshūrāʾ Day and Yom Kippur," *Ancient Near Eastern* Studies (2001), Vol. 38:200-214; Ph. Marcais, "'Āshūrāʾ," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [1:705].

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first to the fifth centuries AH (the eighth to the eleventh centuries CE). However, it is first necessary to discuss the development of the pilgrimage itself.

The Aims of Shiite Visiting Ḥusayn's shrine

Shiism lays great stress on the visit of saints' shrines of both sexes. First and foremost among these, are the tombs of the Prophet Muḥammad and the various imams, in particular that of Ḥusayn, as well as the tombs of a number of women who enjoy a special status in Shiite history, such as Khadīja[4] (d. 620 CE), Fāṭima[5] (d. 632 CE), Zaynab, daughter of ʿAlī[6] (d. 682 CE), and others who played some role in Shiite history.

These acts of visiting have a number of purposes according to Shiite imams. One purpose is so that the faithful can maintain contact with their imams, who will then intercede on their behalf on the Day of Judgment. In addition, by honoring their deceased imams Shiites also honor their religion. Furthermore, by performing the pilgrimage the believer renews his vows of loyalty to the imam. Lastly, this act serves to maintain the self-awareness of Shiites as a group with its own identity, separate from Sunnis. This can explain why Shiites have turned the tombs of their imams, and in particular the Tomb of Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ, into centers of worship which at times enjoyed a status that is not inferior to that of the Kaʿba,[7] in particular during the conflict between the Ṣafawids (1501-1722) and the Ottomans (1516-1917).

There exists an entire genre of Shiite writings devoted to the subject of pilgrimage to the tombs of Shiite imams, known as "books of pilgrimage" (*kutub al-mazār* or *al-ziyāra*).[8] In prose and verse these books address

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[4] For details, see: W. Montgomery Watt, "Khadīdja," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [4:898-899].

[5] For details, see: L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Fāṭima," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [2:841-850].

[6] For details, see: Khayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī, *Al-Aʿlām* (Beirut: Dāl al-ʿilm lil-malāyīn, 7th printing, 1986): 3:66-67.

[7] Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam, A Study of the Devotional Aspects of Ashūrā in Twelver Shīʿism* (The Hague: 1978), pp. 181-182; Yitzhak Nakash, "The Visiting of the Shrines of the Imams and the Shīʿite Mujtahids in the Early Twentieth Century," *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995) pp. 5-16.

[8] One book of this kind is *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* by Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qawlawayh (d. 367/977), a book containing 755 traditions concerning visits to the tomb of the Prophet Muḥammad and the shrines of the imams and their children, the clothes one wears on such a pilgrimage, and the merits of these visits. The traditions are arranged in chronological order, beginning with the Prophet and ending with the twelfth imam. Of the book's 108 chapters and 377 medium-sized pages, 85 chapters and about ninety percent of the content are devoted to visits to the shrine of Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ. Other books that deal with the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb are: *Al-Mazār*, by Sheikh Al-Mufīd (Muḥammad b Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān

relevant themes such as the times of the various pilgrimages, prayers and ceremonies connected with them, the manner in which the pilgrimages are to be performed, and their supposed virtues. The tomb which is most frequently mentioned as a pilgrimage site in this literature is that of Ḥusayn; its descriptions are also the richest in content.

This is mainly due to the fact that later imams adulated Ḥusayn continuously and intensively, so that his memory was very firmly entrenched in the Shiite mind and visiting his shrine became the foremost religious occasion for Shiites the world over. In the opinion of Sheikh Mahdī Shams al-Dīn,[9] (d. 2001 CE) the reason for the great adoration Shiite feel toward Ḥusayn lies in his tragic death, coupled with the fact that, unlike his father ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[10] (d. 661 CE), who also fought many wars but did so from a position of power and authority, he, Ḥusayn, fought from the outside against the ruling Umayyad caliphs.

Types of pilgrimage and their virtues

Two types of pilgrimage to the tomb of Ḥusayn exist, common and official. Whereas common visits may be made on any day of the year, there are designated days for official visits, known as "special visits" or "exalted times" (*ziyārāt makhṣūṣa, al-awqāt al-sharīfa*).[11] The times for "official visits" to the shrine are as follows (in order from the beginning to the end of the Muslim year):

A. *The Pilgrimage of ʿĀshūrā'*, on the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram, the anniversary of Ḥusayn's death. According to tradition, a visit to the shrine on this day has the following merits: the visitor will earn intercession on his behalf on the Day of Judgment, his wishes will be granted, his needs

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al-ʿUkbarī) (d. 1022); *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAlawī al-Shajarī (d. 1053). Contemporary books on pilgrimage to Shiite shrines are numerous indeed. Several are: *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, by ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Al-Anwār al-lāmiʿa fī sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa*, by ʿAbd Allāh Shabbar, and *Nūr al-ʿayn fī al-mashy ilā ziyārat qabr al-Ḥusayn*, by Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Iṣṭahbānātī.

[9] His full name is Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ḥārithī al-Ḥamdānī al-ʿĀmilī, a Shiite scholar and the author of a number of books, who was born in Najaf in 1931. He moved to Lebanon in 1969 and was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council and later, in 1993, Chairman. He died in Beirut in 2001. For further detail see Faiṣal Khālid al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī* (Beirut: Dār wa-maktabat al-hilāl, 1st printing, 2004), fn. 1.

[10] For details, see: L. Veccia Vaglieri, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [3:240-243].

[11] For more details, see: ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* (Beirut: Dār al-mujtabā, 1st printing, 1995), p. 503.

will be fulfilled, and his enemies will be repelled.[12] Any pilgrim who sleeps overnight at the shrine on that day will encounter God on the Day of Judgment with the blood of Ḥusayn on him, as if he had been killed with him on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, and will enter Paradise on that day. A visitor to the shrine on that day who admits the justice of Ḥusayn's cause is likened to someone who has visited God on His throne.[13]

B. *The Pilgrimage of the Fortieth Day* (*ziyārat al-arbaʿīn*),[14] also known as the *return of the head* (*maradd al-raʾs*). This visit to the tomb takes place on the twentieth day of the month of Ṣafar. It was on this day, according to Shiite tradition, that Ḥusayn's severed head was returned from Damascus and laid to rest with the body. This pilgrimage is one of the five "distinguishing characteristics" (*ʿalāmāt*) of the Shiite believer.[15]

C. *The Pilgrimage of the First Day of the Month of Rajab*.[16] Performance of this pilgrimage is believed to result in all the pilgrim's sins being forgiven.[17]

D. *The Pilgrimage of Mid-Rajab* (known also as "*the neglected pilgrimage*" [*al-ghafīla*]),[18] due to popular indifference to it despite its purported merit of earning the pilgrim forgiveness for his sins, past as well as recent.[19]

E. *The Pilgrimage of Mid-Shaʿbān*[20] This performance, so tradition claims, will result in the pilgrim being greeted by one-hundred and twenty-

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[12] *Ibid*., pp. 497-498.

[13] For details, see: Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, edited and with a commentary by Al-Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī al-Tabrīzī (Al-Najaf: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-murtaḍawiyya, 1356/1937), pp. 173-174.

[14] For more details on this pilgrimage and the way it is celebrated, see: Al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, pp. 501-503; M. Ayoub, "Arbaʿīn," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [2:276].

[15] These are: (1) Performing fifty-one *rakʿa*s daily (the seventeen obligatory performances, and another thirty-four supererogatory ones); (2) the pilgrimage of the fortieth day; (3) wearing the signet ring on the right hand; (4) touching the forehead to the earth when performing the ritual prostration; and (5) pronouncing out loud the invocation "In the name of God, the Clement, the Merciful". For details see Al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, pp. 501-502; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭawsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 4th printing, 1945), 6:52, no. 37; Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan), *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa* (Qumm: Muʾassasat āl al-bayt li-ʾiḥyāʾ al-turāth, 1st printing, 1409/1988), 5:81, no. 49; Raḍy al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl* (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 2nd printing, 1367/1947), p. 589.

[16] For more on the month of Rajab, see: M.J. Kister, "Radjab," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [8:373-374]; idem, "Radjab the Month of God," *Israel Oriental Studies* (1971), Tel-Aviv University, pp. 191-223.

[17] See Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿAlawī al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusaynī ʿalayhi al-salām*, edited by Al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm: Maṭbaʿat al-khiyām, 1403/1982), p. 76; Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 182.

[18] See: Al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, p. 477.

[19] See: Al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 77.

[20] For details on the month see: A.J. Wensinck, "Shaʿbān," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [9:154].

four thousand prophets, all of whom will ask God to visit that night.[21] This pilgrimage, too, earns the pilgrim forgiveness for past and recent sins.[22]

F. *The Pilgrimage of the Nights of Revelation* ([*layālī al-qadr*] in particular, the nights of the 19th, the 21st and the 23rd of Ramaḍān).[23] Visiting the shrine during the month of fasting has, according to Shiite sources, the merit that if the pilgrim dies on the way, he will enter Paradise unconditionally, irrespective of his previous sins.[24]

G. *The Pilgrimage of ʿīd al-fiṭr* (first of the month of Shawwāl).[25] The merit of this pilgrimage is claimed to equal the performance of one-hundred official pilgrimages (*ḥajj*) to Mecca, one-hundred "minor" pilgrimages (*ʿumra*) and one-hundred raids under the command of a prophet sent by God and a just imam.[26]

H. *The Pilgrimage of the Night of ʿArafa* (ninth day of the month of Dhū al-ḥijja).[27] The supposed merits of this pilgrimage are great indeed. It is claimed that the visit is equal to the performance of one-thousand official pilgrimages, one-thousand "minor" pilgrimages, and one-hundred raids under the command of a prophet sent by God.[28] Furthermore, with each step the pilgrim takes, God inscribes a full pilgrimage to Mecca, with all its attendant ceremonies in the pilgrim's favor; in fact, God, on the day of ʿArafa, is said to heed first the visitors to the shrine of Ḥusayn, whose needs he meets and whose sins he forgives first, and only then does He attend to the pilgrims at ʿArafāt. According to another tradition, a visit to Ḥusayn's shrine on the day of ʿArafa is equivalent to the performance of one-million regular pilgrimages to Mecca in the company of the Twelfth Imam Muḥammad al-Qāʾim[29] (the Mahdī) and one-million "minor" pilgrimages in the company of the Prophet, as well as to freeing a million souls and conveying a million horses for the sake of God. Furthermore, God will call such a

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[21] Al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, p. 76; Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 180.

[22] Al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 75, 77.

[23] For details on the month see: M. Plessner, "Ramaḍān," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [8:417-418].

[24] Al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, p. 77.

[25] For details on the month see: A.J. Wensinck, "Shawwāl," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [9:380].

[26] Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, p. 79.

[27] For details on ʿArafa see: A.J. Wensinck [H.A.R. Gibb], "ʿArafa," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [1:604].

[28] See: Al-Shajarī, *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 75, 77, 78; Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, pp. 182-184.

[29] For more details on this imam, see: J.G.J. Ter Haar, "ʿMuḥammad al-Ḳāʾim," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:443]; A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism, The Idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shiʿism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981); Dwight M. Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion* (London: Luzac and Company, 1933), pp. 226-241.

pilgrim "my righteous servant," the angels will call him "righteous," and on earth he will be called a cherub.[30]

I. *The Pilgrimage of the Day of Sacrifice* (*ʿīd al-aḍḥā*),[31] on the tenth of the month of Dhū al-ḥijja.

The Umayyad and Abbasid ban on visiting the Tomb of Ḥusayn

The Umayyad caliphs (661-750 CE) and their Abbasid successors (750-1258) realized the danger to them of mass pilgrimages to the shrine of Ḥusayn. They therefore stationed patrols on the roads leading to Karbalāʾ to discourage visits to the tomb. Those who attempted the pilgrimage were arrested and punished; some were even executed.[32] The measures taken to prevent visits to the shrine were so harsh, in fact, that they affected the way Shiites behaved on such visits, and gave rise to questions concerning the way the pilgrimage should be performed when conditions are uncertain. Thus, Ibn Qawlawayh[33] (d. 978 or 979 CE) devoted the forty-fifth chapter of his *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* to "The merits of one who visits Ḥusayn in a state of fear," in which various statements attributed to Shiite imams on this topic are quoted.[34]

Nevertheless, there were also times when permission was given to visit the tomb and to recite poems over it. This was the case in particular during the imamate of al-Ṣādiq[35] (d. 765 CE), which coincided with the transition

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[30] See: Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 172.

[31] For more details on the feast, see: E. Mittwoch, "ʿĪd Al-Aḍḥa," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [3:1007].

[32] Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-umam wal-mulūk* (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-tijāriyya al-kubrā, 1939), 7:365; ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1978), 5:287.

[33] For details, see: Martin McDermott, "Ebn Qūlawayh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [8:47].

[34] The history of Arab literature teaches us that many prominent opposition poets of the time, such as the Khārijite ʿUmrān b. Ḥaṭṭān (d. 703 CE), the Shiite Al-Kumayt b. Zayd (d. 744 CE) and others, were forced to declare their loyalty to the Umayyad rulers. Thus, ʿUmrān b. Ḥaṭṭān came to Damascus in order to pledge his allegiance to the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān. He did not succeed in doing so, and spent the last years of his life as a fugitive running from tribe to tribe out of fear of Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 714 CE) who pursued him. Al-Kumayt, on the other hand, did declare his allegiance to the Umayyad rulers after he had attained the status of the greatest Shiite poet in the first century of Islam. He provided an obvious example of the extent of Umayyad pressure on and intimidation of those who opposed them, regardless of whether we consider Al-Kumayt's action as stemming from persuasion or dissimulation. For more details, see: George Kanazi, "ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAwf b. al-Aḥmar shāʿir al-tawwābīn fī al-qarn al-hijrī al-awwal," Al-Karmil, Haifa: Haifa University, 18-19 (1997-1998), p. 332.

[35] For details on the imam, see: M.G.S. Hodgson, "Djaʿfar al-Ṣādiq," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [2:374-375].

from the Umayyad to the Abbasid period. This was a time in which both pilgrimages to Ḥusayn's shrine and poems about him flourished, a fact which is reflected in the number of traditions in which al-Ṣādiq is quoted as encouraging his followers to write verses praising Ḥusayn and to visit his shrine, and in traditions reporting the arrival of delegations of poets, singers, and writers of elegies at the house of al-Ṣādiq in Medina. In one of these traditions, it is related that al-Ṣādiq asked a man who had arrived from Kūfa about the state of Ḥusayn's tomb as it had been described to him. The man answered: "I was informed that [the shrine] is visited by people from Kūfa and from elsewhere as well [. . .] This happens in the middle of the month of Shaʿbān, and elegies are recited . . ."[36]

The second period which saw a relative abundance of poetry devoted to Ḥusayn was in the times of al-Ṣādiq's grandson, the imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā[37] (d. 818 CE), especially after the latter had been appointed heir apparent to the caliph al-Maʾmūn[38] (813-833 CE). This circumstance encouraged many Shiite poets to visit Ḥusayn's tomb and to compose elegies at the site.

In these two periods, coinciding with the imamate of al-Ṣādiq and that of al-Riḍā, poetry devoted to Ḥusayn flourished as at no other time. In contrast, the most difficult times in this respect were during the imamate of ʿAlī al-Hādī[39] (d. 868 CE), during the reign of the caliph al-Mutawakkil[40] (784-861 CE) who took harsh steps against the shrine and against Shiites in general. Throughout his reign, he had guards posted on the outskirts of Karbalāʾ, whose task it was to drive away prospective visitors to Ḥusayn's tomb and to punish severely any who managed to perform the pilgrimage. Four times during the fifteen years he ruled (846-861 CE), he ordered the tomb destroyed, plowed under, and inundated with water from the Euphrates.[41] He ordered this first in 846, after his songstress visited the shrine in the month of Shaʿbān, and then again in 850, in 851 and in 861.

Doubtlessly the prohibition had the effect, at least for a time, of reducing the flow of pilgrims to the shrine. In fact, the repression occasionally was

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[36] See: Al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa*, 14:599, no. 19897; Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, pp. 325-326, no. 1.

[37] For details on the imam, see: B. Lewis, "ʿAlī al-Riḍā," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [1:399-400].

[38] For details on the caliph, see: M. Rekaya, "Al-Maʾmūn b. Hārūn Al-Rashīd," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [4:331-400].

[39] For details on this imam, see: Dwight M. Donaldson, *The* Shiite *Religion*, pp. 209-216.

[40] For details on the caliph, see: J.R. Blackburn, "Al-Mutawakkil ʿalāʾllāh," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:778-780].

[41] For further details, see: Salmān Hādī Āl Ṭaʿma, *Taʾrīkh marqad al-Ḥusayn wal-ʿAbbās (ʿalayhimā al-salām)* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, 1st printing, 1996), p. 77.

such that the twelfth imam, Muḥammad al-Mahdī (whose occultation occurred in Sāmirrāʾ in 874 CE), instructed all Shiites to refrain from visiting the tomb of Ḥusayn, and the tombs of the other imams as well.[42]

Al-Shajarī, in his *Kitāb al-amālī*, relates a tradition in the name of Hishām b. Muḥammad, who is quoted as saying: "When the water flowed over the grave of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī—peace be on them both—it was absorbed into the ground after forty days. The site of the grave had disappeared, whereupon an Arabian of the tribe of the Banū Asad came, picked up one handful of soil after the other and smelled them, until he reached Ḥusayn's grave, smelled it, burst into tears and said: "I swear by my father and mother, nothing smells sweeter than you and your tomb." Then he cried again and composed this verse:

أرادوا ليخفوا قبره عن عدوّه فطيبُ التراب دلّ على القبر

They intended to hide his grave from his enemies
But the fragrance of the soil of the grave drew [people] to it.[43]

Things changed in the latter part of the Abbasid period, in particular after the Buwayhids[44] (932-1056 CE) assumed *de facto* control of Iraq and Iran. When Muʿizz al-Dawla Aḥmad b. Buwayh[45] (932-967 CE) entered Baghdad in the year 946 CE, he ordered that public Shiite obsequies and mourning ceremonies be held in that city. A similar revival of the Shiite cult founded by Ḥamdān b. Ḥamdūn occurred in Syria under the Ḥamdānid[46] dynasty in Aleppo (893-1108 CE),[47] and in Cairo under the Fāṭimids (909-1071 CE). Historical sources make special mention of the latter dynasty's fourth caliph, al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh[48] (931-975 CE) after whose entry into Cairo in 972 CE the public celebration of Shiite holidays was greatly cultivated.[49] In these times it was again safe to visit Ḥusayn's shrine openly. Pilgrimage to the site became an acceptable social and political religious activity which was performed freely and with no risk.

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[42] Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalāʾ fī al-wujdān al-shīʿī* (Beirut: Al-Muʾassasa al-dawliyya lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 3rd printing, 2000), p. 80.

[43] Al-Shajarī, *Kitāb al-amālī*, 1:163.

[44] For details on the dynasty see: C. Lollin Davies, "Buwayhids or Būhids," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [1:1350-1357].

[45] For details, see: Al-Zarkalī, *Al-Aʿlām*, 1:105.

[46] For details on the dynasty, see: M. Canard, "Ḥamdānids," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [3:126-131].

[47] For details see: Al-Zarkalī, *Al-Aʿlām*, 2:274.

[48] For details on the caliph, see: F. Dachraoui, "Al-Muʿizz Li-Dīn Allāh," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:485-489].

[49] For more details, see: Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Alfāẓ al-ḥunafāʾ bi-akhbār al-ʾaʾimma al-fāṭimiyyina al-khulafāʾ* (Cairo: Ministry of Religious Endowments, 2nd printing, 1996), p. 142.

Invocations during the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Ḥusayn

Every kind of pilgrimage has a different invocation which the pilgrim pronounces repeatedly during his visit to the shrine. Various "books of pilgrimage" have left us numerous examples of such invocations, which all possess the basic common structure:

> At first the pilgrim thanks God for having graced him with the opportunity to perform the particular pilgrimage in question;
>
> Then the pilgrim asks God to answer the prayers of His supplicant, a true believer in God and the prophets;
>
> Next the pilgrim begins pronouncing a series of greetings, saluting first Ḥusayn, then the angels,[50] and finally all the believers in Ḥusayn's cause;
>
> The pilgrim then goes on to declare his own loyalty to and belief in Ḥusayn, and testifies to the latter's having been a victim of his own just cause;
>
> After that the pilgrim turns to God and asks Him to make him, the pilgrim, empathize with Ḥusayn, join him in his *jihad*, and be his companion in this world and the next;
>
> The pilgrim then again praises God, asks Him to accept his pilgrimage as an act of devotion, declares his hostility toward Ḥusayn's enemies, curses the Umayyad rulers and their adherents, and then again calls on God to make him, the pilgrim, His devoted servant;
>
> At this stage, the pilgrim again mentions Ḥusayn and calls on God to inscribe him with those who were killed with the martyr;
>
> Then the pilgrim declares that Ḥusayn fought for the sake of justice, that he was "the avenger of God" and, again, denounces Ḥusayn's enemys;
>
> He now greets those who died with Ḥusayn on the battlefield of Karbalā', whom he declares to be his companions, who march with him on the path of one-and-the-same *jihad*;
>
> At this point, the pilgrim praises the one-and-only God and declares that the fate of Ḥusayn concerns all human beings, who are all his guarantors and responsible for avenging his spilt blood, since his revolution concerned all of mankind and was not a matter for just one family or sect;
>
> Next, the pilgrim expresses his hope, based on Divine promise, for an eventual decisive victory; during this stage of the pilgrimage a renewed declaration concerning the justness of Ḥusayn's adherents (*anṣār al-Ḥusayn*)[51]

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[50] For details on angels in Islām, see: W. Madeling, "Malā'ika," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [6:216-219].

[51] These adherents, also referred to as "Ḥusayn's companions" (*aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn*), were seventy-two in number, members of his family as well as friends and companions who fought with him at Karbalā'. They were all killed, except for one of Ḥusayn's sons, a child by the name of 'Alī b. Ḥusayn. For more details on them, see, for example: 'Alī Muḥammad Dakhkhīl, *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-tayyār al-jadīd, 2nd printing, 1985); Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Anṣār al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa al-dawliyya lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 3rd printing, 1996).

is made, followed by repeated calls on and praise of God, constituting the climax of the pilgrimage (such calls and praises permeate all stages of the pilgrimage);

The pilgrim then again bears witness that Ḥusayn's revolution was done in the name of God, and follows this with an enumeration of Ḥusayn's enemies and a solemn declaration that he, the pilgrim, will have absolutely nothing to do with them;

At this point, the pilgrim, having reached a peak of emotional excitation, once again announces his complete and utter opposition to Ḥusayn's Umayyad enemies, curses them and relates their various sins: they did not believe in the Prophet, they destroyed the Kaʿba, distorted the Qurʾān, shed the blood of the Prophet's family, destroyed the land and derided the believers. On this occasion, the pilgrim also mentions various battles in which the Umayyad rulers wronged the Prophet's family, such as the Battle of al-Ḥarra[52] (682 CE), the revolt of Ibn al-Zubayr[53] (d. 692 CE), put down by al-Ḥajjāj (d. 714 CE), and the destruction of the Kaʿba.[54]

The preceding description fits most of the texts[55] reportedly used by pilgrims visiting the shrine of Ḥusayn, and consists of the following elements:

A. Invoking God's name, uttering His praises, and declaring His Sovereignty, His Greatness and His power.
B. Praising Ḥusayn and the Prophet's family, as representatives of Divine law and the true path which it marks.
C. Evoking the events of the death of Ḥusayn and the others who were killed with him, and praising Ḥusayn for having struggled for justice.
D. Expressing hope for victory in the future and a refusal to give in to despair.
E. Declaring the bond between the Shiite person and Ḥusayn, promising to follow in the latter's footsteps, and absolutely disavowing any link to the powers whose course differed from that of Ḥusayn.

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[52] For details on the battle, see: L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Al-Ḥarra," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [3:226-227].

[53] For details on him, see: H.A.R. Gibb, "'Abd Allāḥ b. al-Zubayr," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [1:54-55].

[54] Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā b. Bābawayh al-Qummī), *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-nashr al-ʾislāmī, 3rd printing, 1413/1992), 2:193, no. 2116, 2:248, no. 2324; Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-Sīʿa*, 13:218-219, no. 17596.

[55] For details on the texts and invocations used during visits to Ḥusayn's shrine, see, for example: Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, pp. 245ff; Al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, pp. 475ff; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Jawharī, *Ḍiyāʾ al-Ṣāiḥīn fī al-ʾadʿiya wal-ziyārāt* (Beirut: Dār al-ʾaḍwāʾ, 3rd printing, 1992), pp. 90-93, 166-171, 179-183, 185-186, 221-225, 230-231, 281-286; Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Aṣṭahbānātī, *Nūr al-ʿayn fī al-mashy ʾilā ziyārat qbr* al-Ḥusayn (Beirut: Dār al-mīzān lil-ṭibāʿa wal-nashr, 1st printing, 1995), pp. 451ff.

Shiite imams encourage the recital of poetry about Ḥusayn on the pilgrimage to his shrine

Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Ḥusayn was always accompanied by a recital of poetry. Shiite imams encouraged this custom and considered it meritorious. Ibn Qūlawayh in his book *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* devotes an entire chapter (Ch. 33) to "The merits of whoever recites a poem about Ḥusayn, weeps and makes others weep.[56] The exhortations to recite poetry began after the battle of Karbalā' or, to be more precise, with the fourth imam, ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn[57] (d. 713 CE), and continued with all his successors. Many traditions relate that the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765) had a penchant for holding mourning ceremonies for Ḥusayn and reciting elegiac poems in his memory. For this purpose poets would come to Medina from afar and recite their elegies in the presence of the imam, who would cry over Ḥusayn's fate together with all others who were present there. For example, one tradition quotes Abū ʿUmāra "the hymnist"[58] (*al-munshid*) as relating the following anecdote: "Al-Ṣādiq said to me: 'Oh Abū ʿUmāra, recite to me a poem about Ḥusayn'. So I recited one and he cried, and then another and he cried, and a third and he cried. In fact, I continued reciting until I heard the sound of crying coming from the house. Then he said to me: 'Oh Abū ʿUmāra, whoever recites a poem in honor of Ḥusayn and makes fifty people cry will surely go to Paradise, and even if he makes forty people cry he will go to Paradise'," [59] the number forty or fifty merely indicating the fact that the poem was heard by a considerable audience.

Another tradition relates that Jaʿfar b. ʿAffān al-Ṭā'ī[60] came into the presence of al-Ṣādiq and approached him. The imam said to him: "Oh Jaʿfar," to which the poet answered: "I am at your service! May I be made your

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[56] See: Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, pp. 104-106.

[57] For details on him, see: E. Kohlberg, "Zayn al-ʿābidīn b. ʿAlī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:397-400].

[58] Abū ʿUmāra "the hymnist" was a contemporary of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. He was the first elegist of Ḥusayn to receive that epithet. His agnomen is the only part of his name that is known. He was a resident of Medina, where he died sometime during the second half of the second century AH/eighth century CE. For more details on him, see: Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāsī, *Dā'irat al-maʿārif al-ḥusayniyya, muʿẓam khuṭbā' al-minbar al-ḥusaynī* (London: Hussaini Centre for Research, 1st printing, 2001), p. 85, fn. 1.

[59] See: Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 208; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, *Āmālī al-ṣadūq* (Teheran: Al-Maktaba al-'islāmiyya, 4th printing, 1404/1983), pp. 141-142, no. 6.

[60] For details on him, see: Al-Karbāsī, *Dā'irat al-maʿārif al-ḥusayniyya*, p. 42; Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, edited and with a commentary and index by asan al-Muṣṭafawī (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1929), p. 289, no. 508; Al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. ʿAlī b. al-Muṭahhar, known as "the erudite from Ḥilla" (*al-ʿallāma al-ḥillī*), *Rijāl al-ʿallāma al-ḥillī* (Qumm: Dār al-dhakhā'ir, 1990), p. 32, no. 8.

ransom." The imam responded: "I have been told that you excel at reciting poetry about Ḥusayn." The poet answered: "Yes, may God make me your ransom." He was then told to recite a poem, which made the imam and all those with him cry until the tears ran down his face and beard.[61] The imam is even reported to have intervened in the stylistic structure of these elegies, by asking poets to compose their works in a gentle, grieving, sad style. Thus, in the following tradition, Abū Hārūn, "the blind man,"[62] (*al-makfūf*) relates:

"The imam Abū ʿAbd Allāh asked me to say a poem in honor of Ḥusayn. I recited one and he cried. He than said to me: 'Recite one the way you usually recite'—by which he meant in a sad way—and so I recited to him the poem which begins as follows:

أمرر على جدث الحسين فقل لأعظمه الزكيّة

Visit the tomb of Ḥusayn
And say to his pure bones.

Then [the imam] wept and asked me to recite some more, so I recited the other poem as well. He wept again; I heard the weeping from beyond the screen."[63]

Shiite sources also mention the fact that imams spent money to have elegies about Ḥusayn disseminated, and to encourage the public to visit his shrine. Thus, in one tradition the caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr[64] (745-775) summoned the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim[65] (d. 799 CE) into his presence on the Persian New Year (*nayrūz*)[66] and presented him with gifts. Then an old

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[61] Al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, p. 289, no. 508, quoted also in Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-wafāʾ, 4th printing, 1984), 44:282-283, no. 16; Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, 14:593-694, no. 19885.

[62] For more details, see: Al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, p. 222, no. 398; Al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma al-Ḥillī*, p. 267, no. 13; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-shaykh al-Ṭūsī* (Teheran: Muʾassasat al-nashr al-ʾislāmī, 1st printing, 1994), p. 150, no. 1670-4; Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Teheran: Teheran University Press, 1963), pp. 14, 44; Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Teheran: Teheran University Press, 1963), p. 551, p. 570, no. 34.

[63] Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, pp. 104-105; Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 44:287, no. 25; Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, 14:593-596, ch. 104, nos. 19885-19889; Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā b. Bāwabah al-Qummī), *Thawāb al-ʾaʿmāl wa-ʿiqāb al-ʾaʿmāl* (Qumm: Dār al-sharīf al-raḍiyy lil-nashr, 2nd printing, 1406/1985), p. 84.

[64] For details on the caliph, see: H. Kennedy, "Al-Manṣūr," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [6:426-428].

[65] For details on the imam, see: E. Kohlberg, "Mūsā al-Kāẓim," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [8:645-648].

[66] Known also as *nawrūz*, meaning "The New Day" of the Persian solar year, in the month of March. For details, see: R. Levy [C.E. Bosworth], "Nawrūz," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:1047].

sheikh entered and recited three stanzas from a poem which his grandfather had composed in the honor of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī.[67] Al-Kāẓim was so delighted with these verses that he handed over to the sheikh all the gifts he had received from the caliph.

Another tradition quotes the poet Diʿbil b. ʿAlī al-Khizāʿī[68] (d. 860 CE), who related what happened when he entered into the presence of the imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā[69] (d. 818 CE) at Merw, at the time the latter was acting as guardian of the caliph Al-Maʾmūn (813-833). This is what Diʿbil says:

"I entered into the presence of my Lord and Master ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā at Merw on the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram. I saw him sitting in a sad posture, with his companions sitting as well. He sat me at his side and said: 'Oh Diʿbil, I would like you to recite a poem to me, for these days have been days of sorrow to us, members of the Prophet's family, and days of rejoicing to our enemies, in particular to the Umayyad family.' He then looked at me and said: 'Oh Diʿbil, recite an elegy for Ḥusayn, for you are our victor and eulogizer as long as you live.'" Whereupon the poet wept and recited the poem whose opening lines are:[70]

أفاطم لو خلت الحسين مجدّلا وقد مات عطشانا بشطّ الفرات

Oh, Fatima! Had you seen it laying down
Dead, while thirsty, on the banks of the Euphrates

When he finished his recital, Abū al-Ḥasan stood up, entered his home and sent the poet a piece of silk cloth with six-hundred dinars inside, and ordered his slave girl to say to him: "Your master says: use this for your journey and forgive us." But Diʿbil said to her: "no, by God, this is not what I wanted, nor is it what I journeyed for. Nay, say to him: give me one of your garments." But Abū al-Ḥasan sent it back to him and said: "Take it," and also sent him an overcoat (*jubba*).[71]

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[67] Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, edited and with a commentary by Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-ʿallāma lil-nashr, 1379/1976), 4:318-319.

[68] For details on him, see: L. Zolondek, "Diʿbil," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [2:248-249].

[69] For details on him, see: B. Lewis, "ʿAlī al-Riḍā," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [1:399-400].

[70] The poem, one-hundred-and-twenty-three lines long, is in the *ṭawīl* meter. For more details, see: ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Abī al-Fatḥ al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī maʿrifat al-ʾaʾimma*, with a commentary by Hāshim al-Rasūlī (Tibrīz: Maktabat Banī Hāshim, 1961), 2:318-327; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 45:257-258, no. 15, where the poem begins on the fifty-fifth line. The entire poem is repeated elsewhere in the book: 49:245-251, no. 13.

[71] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān al-ʿUkbarī, *Al-ʾirshād*, edited by Muʾassasat āl al-bayt ʿalayhim al-salām li-ʾiḥyāʾ al-turāth (Qumm: Al-Muʾtamar al-ʿālamī bi-munāsabat

Traditions such as these demonstrate that Shiite imams encouraged the recital of poetry in honor of Ḥusayn and considered such recitals as meritorious acts. Traditions in this vein are numerous, with many written down in books devoted specifically to this topic, of which perhaps the best known among Shiite scholars is *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, mentioned above. Shiite have indeed acted in accordance to the wishes of their imams and written a great number of elegies in honor of Ḥusayn, praising him and extolling the merits of visiting his shrine. Such poems are still being composed to this very day.[72] The pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's Tomb has become a season of continuous mourning ceremonies and poetry recitals at the shrine at Karbalāʾ, still attended by crowds of pilgrims.

The pilgrimage to the Shrine of Ḥusayn in Shiite poetry

In their elegies to Ḥusayn Shiite poets extol the virtues of the Prophet's family and, since the second century AH, also have been referring to the rites of the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb. The poetical references to the pilgrimage became common, especially after visiting the tomb had become part of the accepted Shiite cult, and pilgrims were no longer at risk. This was the state of affairs during the latter Abbasid period, when the Buwayhids had taken control of Iraq and Iran, and the Ḥamdānites ruled in Syria.

At first, in particular during the first century AH, poems that mention visiting Ḥusayn's tomb are rare indeed. Poets that do mention the pilgrimage usually use the expression "I passed by" (*marartu*). Thus, for example, Sulaymān b. Qatta[73] (d. 126/743) passed through Karbalāʾ three days after Ḥusayn's death. He saw the corpses of the dead, stood leaning on his horse, and began reciting the following lines:[74]

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dhikrā alfiyyat al-shaykh al-Mufīd, 1992), 2:264; Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imama* (Qumm: Dār al-dhakhāʾir lil-maṭbūʿāt, 1963), p. 183; Ibn Dāwud, *Kitāb al-rijāl*, p. 148, no. 591; Al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, p. 509, no. 970.

[72] The continued composition of poems in honor of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī today, more than 1300 years after his death, is a phenomenon in Arab literature, due to the exhortations of Shiite imams, and the great religious merit they attribute to the writers of such poetry. For more details on this issue, see: Khalid Sindawi, *The Muqātil in* Shiite *Literature*, Ph.D. dissertation (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2000), pp. 35-36 [Hebrew].

[73] For more details on the poet, see: Najam al-Dīn Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-ʾaḥzān* (Qumm: Madrasat al-imām al-mahdī, 3rd printing, 1985), pp. 110-111; Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 45:291, 45:293-294; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs, *Al-Luhūf ʿAlā qatlā al-ṭufūf* (Teheran: Dār al-ʿālam lil-nashr, 1929), p. 119; Jawād Shubbar, *Adab al-Ṭaff aw shuʿarāʾ al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Manshūrāt muʾassasat al-ʾaʿlamī, 1969), 1:54.

[74] The eight-line poem is composed in the *ṭawīl* meter. For more details, see: Al-Shajarī, *Al-ʾAmāli* 1:161-162; Jawād Shubbar, *Adab al-Ṭaff*, 1:54. Some sources attribute the poem to Abū Ramḥ al-Khuzāʿī; for details, see: Ibn Namā, *Muthīr al-aḥzān*, pp. 110-111.

مـررت على أبيـات آل محمد فلم أرهـا أمثـالها حين حلتِ
فلا يُبعد الله الديـار وأهلهـا وإن أصبحت منهم برغم تخلّت
ألا إنّ قتلى الطّف من آل هاشم أذلّت رقابَ المسـلمين فذلّت
وكـانوا غياثا ثم أضحوا رزيّة لقد عظمت تلك الرزايا وجلتِ

I passed by the houses of Muḥammad's family
And realized that they are no more like they were
May God keep them close the place and the family
Although they unwillingly turned void
Those of Hashim's family who were killed at al-Taff
Brought humiliation to the Muslims pride
Previously they were generous but now they became a calamity
Certainly those calamities are hard to bear!

The following is the second line in a poem composed by ʿUqba b. ʿAmr al-Sahmī,[75] said to have been the first poet to have written an elegy for Ḥusayn:[76]

مررتُ على قبر الحسين بكربلاء ففاض عليه من دموعي غزيرها

I passed by the tomb of Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ
And abundance of tears gushed over it.

At the beginning of a five-line poem Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī[77] (d. between 789 and 795 CE) commands:[78]

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[75] For details on the poet, see: Shubbar, *Shuʿarāʾ al-Ṭaff*, 1:53; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 4:123.

[76] The ten-line poem is composed in the *ṭawīl* meter. It was written in the first century AH when the poet visited Ḥusayn's tomb. For more details on the poem, see: Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Al-ʾAmālī* (Qumm: Dār al-thaqāfa lil-nashr, 1993), pp. 93-94, nos. 143-52, and also pp. 235-236, no. 417-9; he is quoted in Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 45:242; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān, known as Sheikh al-Mufīd, *Al-ʾAmālī* (Qumm: Al-Muʾtamar al-ʿālamī li-alfiyyat al-shaykh al-Mufīd, 1st printing, 1992), p. 325, no. 9; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 4:123; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭurayḥī, *Al-muntakhab lil-Ṭurayḥī fī jamʿ al-marāthī wal-khuḍab*, better known as just *Al-Fakhrī* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, no date), p. 8; Ibn Namā, *Muthīr al-ʾaḥzān*, pp. 83-84; Abū Manjaf (Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn wa-maṣraʿ ahl baytihi wa-aṣḥābihi bi-Karbalāʾ* (Al-Najaf: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-ḥaydariyya, 1928), pp. 142-143; Yūsuf b. Furghulī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Baghdādī, know as Sibṭ b. Abī al-Faraj b. al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-khawāṣṣ*, known also as *Tadhkirat khawāṣṣ al-umma fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-aʾimma* (Al-Najaf: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-ḥaydariyya, 1964), p. 270; Al-Ṭayyib al-ʿAshshāsh, *Dīwān ashʿār al-tashayyuʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, 1st printing, 1997), pp. 240-241; Muḥsin al-Amīn al-Ḥusaynī al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa* (Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-inṣāf), 41:23; Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, *Taʾsīs al-shīʿa li-ʿulūm al-islām* (Baghdad: Sharikat al-nashr wal-ṭibāʿa al-ʿirāqiyya al-maḥdūda, 1951), p. 204; Shubbar, *Adab al-Ṭaff*, 1:52.

[77] For details on him, see: Wadad Kadi, "Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [9:116-117].

[78] This five-line poem is composed in *kāmil* meter. For details, see: Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, *Dīwān al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī*, with an introduction by Nawāf al-Jarrāḥ (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1st

أمرر على جدث الحسين وقل لأعظمه الزكيّة

Visit the tomb of Ḥusayn
And say to his pure bones.

By the time Diʿbil b. ʿAlī al-Khizāʿī (d. 860 CE) recited the following verse in the presence of the imam, ʿAlī al-Riḍā, visits to the tombs of members of the Prophet's family, and that of Ḥusayn in particular, had become quite rare:[79]

قبور ببطن النهر من جنب كربلاء معرسّهم منها بشطّ الفراتِ

[There are] tombs deep inside the river's bed next to Karbalāʾ
[And] their resting place is on the banks of the Euphrates.

For in another line he says:

قليلة زوّار سوى أن زُورا من الضبع والعقبان والرخمات

Pilgrims are rare indeed, except for visitors
From hyenas, eagles and vultures.

The latter indeed reflects the desolation surrounding Ḥusayn's tomb, due no doubt to the lack of Shiite pilgrims in the wake of the harsh measures the Umayyad rulers took in this matter,[80] as mentioned above.

A. *The poets urge themselves and others to visit Ḥusayn's shrine*

Shiite poets in their works call on themselves and on other believers to perform the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb. This may be due to their obedience to the call of the imams to perform such a pilgrimage, or perhaps is based on the ancient Arab poetic tradition of evoking an unknown person or persons by calling on him or them to stop at the camp-site of a beloved one who has departed, in order to contemplate the camp remains.

Thus Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī commands:[81]

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printing, 1999), pp. 179-180. This poem as also been ascribed to Diʿbil al-Khuzāʿī; see: Ibn Namā, *Muthīr al-aḥzān*, p. 83.

[79] The one-hundred-line poem is composed in the *ṭawīl* meter. For details, see: Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī maʿrifat al-aʾimma*, 2:318-327, quoted in Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 45:257, 49:245-249. It should be pointed out that some sources ascribe this poem to Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī; for details, see: Al-Ḥimyarī, *Dīwān al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī*, pp. 179-180.

[80] See: Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīn*, with a commentary by Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Beirut: Dār al-maʿrifa, no date), p. 122.

[81] For more details on this poem, see fn. 86 above.

أمرر على جدث الحسين وقل لأعظمه الزكية
فإذا مررت بقبره فأطل به وقف المطيّة

Visit the tomb of Ḥusayn
And say to his pure bones.
And once you pass by his grave
Stop your mount for a long time.

Similarly, in the following verse by Al-Qāsim b. Yūsuf al-Kātib[82] (d. 828), a Shīʿit poet from the Abbasid period:[83]

سلّم على قبر الحسين صلى الله عليك من قبر

Greet Ḥusayn's tomb and say
May God pray on you, what a grave you are!

The poet Al-Ṣanawbarī[84] (d. 943 CE) addresses the visitor to Ḥusayn's grave as:[85]

سر راشدا يا أيها السائر ما حار من مقصده حائر
ما حار من زار إمام الهدى خير مزور زاره زائر
مَنْ جدّه أطهر جدّ ومن لا شكّ الأدب طاهر

Walk on the right course, oh wayfarer
For he who visits the Ḥā'ir (Ḥusayn's tomb) will never be bewildered
He who visits the imam of the rightousness shall not be perplexed
He is the best person a visitor can visit.
He whose grandfather was the purest of all grandfathers
Who was doubtlessly of pure manner

This poem may well have been recited on the occasion of the departure of a procession of pilgrims on their way to Karbalā'.

In another poem by Al-Ṣanawbarī says:[86]

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[82] For details, see: Fuat Sözgün, *Ta'rīkh al-turāth al-ʿarabī*, trans. into Arabic by Dr. Maḥmūd Fahmī Ḥijāzī et al. (Riyadh: Dār al-thaqāfa wal-nashr bil-jāmiʿa, 1991), p. 201; Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣawlī, *Akhbār al-shuʿarā'*, known as *Al-Awrāq*, edited by J. Hayworth Dunn (no publisher, 1755), pp. 146ff; Shubbar, *Adab al-Ṭaff*, 1:335; Khayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī, *Al-Aʿlām*, 5:186.

[83] This forty-nine-line poem is composed in the *basīṭ* meter. For more details, see: Shubbar, *Adab al-Ṭaff*, 1:332-334; Muḥammad b. ʿUmrān al-Marzabānī, *Akhbār shuʿarā' al-shīʿa*, edited by Muḥammad Hādī al-Amīnī (Beirut: Sharikat al-Kutaybī lil-ṭibāʿa wal-nashr, 2nd printing, 1993), pp. 110-112; Al-Ṣawlī, *Akhbār al-shuʿarā'*, pp. 181-183.

[84] For details, see: J.E. Montgomery, "Al-Ṣanawbarī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [9:8-9].

[85] This fifty-line poem is written in the *basīṭ* meter. For more details, see: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣanawbarī, *Dīwān al-Ṣanawbarī*, edited by Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1970), pp. 267-273.

[86] This eighty-line poem is written in the *basīṭ* meter. For details, see: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Ḍabbī al-Ṣanawbarī, *Dīwān al-Ṣanawbarī*, pp. 267-273.

سلم على نازل بالطف منزله إن السلام عليه كان مفترضا
على الحسين سبط الرسول على المقبوض مشتهيا للماء إذ قبضا

Greet him who visits him whose abode is in Ḥaff
For greeting him is predestined.
For Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet
Who was apprehended while thirsty for water.

Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād[87] (d. 995 CE) wrote a *rajaz*[88] poem in which he addresses pilgrims visiting the tombs of the Prophet and the imams. In the sixth and seventh lines, he addresses visitors to Ḥusayn's shrine:[89]

وعدْ إلى الطفّ بكربلاء أهد سلامي أحسنَ الاهداء
بخير مَنْ قد ضمّه الصعيد ذاك الحسينُ السيّدُ الشهيدُ

[then] go back to Ṭaff at Karbalāʾ
And give there my best greeting.
To the best one embraced by earth,
Ḥusayn, the martyred master.

In another *rajaz* poem he asks visitors to Ḥusayn's shrine to greet him and the other martyrs of Karbalāʾ in his name, thus (line 6 of the poem):[90]

وأبلغوا القتلى بأرض الطفّ تحيّتي ألفان بعد ألفِ

And give the dead in the soil of Ṭaff
My greetings, two-thousand and one-thousand more.

B. *The impulse that motivated the poet to visit Ḥusayn's tomb*

Among the motives for visiting the shrine are the poet's longing for Ḥusayn, as well as his desire to express his grief and to mourn over him. These motives are made quite explicit in various poems.

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[87] For details, see: Cl. Cahen and Ch. Pellat, "Ibn ʿAbbād," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [3:671-673].

[88] For details on *rajaz* poems, see: W. Heinrichs, "Radjaz," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [8:375-379].

[89] This is a sixteen-line poem composed in the *basīṭ* meter. For details, see: *Dīwān al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, edited by Sheikh Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, 2nd printing, 1974), pp. 205-207; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 1:321.

[90] This is a seventeen-line poem in the *rajaz* meter. For details, see: Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 1:320-321; *Dīwān al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, edited by Sheikh Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, 2nd printing, 1974), pp. 241-242.

Thus, ʿUqba b. ʿAmr al-Sahmī expresses himself:[91]

مررتُ على قبر الحسين بكربلاء ففاض عليه من دموعي غزيرها
وما زلت أرثيه وأبكي لشجوه ويُسعدُ عيني دمعُها وزفيرُها
وبكيتُ من بعد الحسين عصائبًا أطافتْ به من جانبيه قبورُها
سلامٌ على أهل القبور بكربلاء وقلَّ لها مني سلام يزورها

I passed by Ḥusayn's grave in Karbalāʾ
And my tears flooded over it.
I am still mourning him and crying in my grief
And my eye rejoices when its tears flow abundantly and moans.
I cried after Ḥusayn's death and over the companions
Whose tombs surrounded his grave.
Peace be on the dwellers of the graves in Karbalāʾ
This is the least that I can do for them

Al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 945 CE), who lived his entire life in Aleppo and Damascus, mentions the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's shrine in a number of his poems, thereby proving that in his day, delegations of pilgrims from Syria visited Karbalāʾ, and that pilgrimage poetry had become a commonplace among Shiites in general, not just in the vicinity of Karbalāʾ itself. In addition, we can deduce from these poems that the countryside had become relatively safe, if large numbers of people were able to travel the considerable distance between Syria and Iraq without fear.

In one of his poems, Al-Ṣanawbarī says:[92]

ما في المنازل حاجة نقضيها إلا السلام وأدمع نذريها
وتفجع للعين فيها حيث لا عيش اوازيه بعيشي فيها
وابكوا دماء لو تشاهد سفكها في كربلاء لما ونت تبكيها
يا هولها بين العمائم واللحى تجري وأسياف العدا تجريها
نبكي قبورًا إن بكينا غيرها بعض البكاء فانما نعنيها

There is nothing for us to do in the abodes [of Ḥusayn]
Except for wishing them peace and shedd tears there.
And very deep crying where no
Living equals my living there
Weep over the blood that, had you witnessed how it was spilled
In Karbalāʾ, your tears would never have abated.
How terrible it was when his soul

[91] For more details on the poem, see fn. 84 above.

[92] This forty-two line poem is written in the *kāmil* meter. For more detail, see: Al-Ṣanawbarī, *Dīwān al-Ṣanawbarī*, pp. 509-511; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Al-Ṣanawbarī, *Tatimmat dīwān Al-Ṣanawbarī*, collated and edited by Luṭfī al-Ṣaqqāl and Dariyya al-Khaṭīb (Aleppo: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1st printing, 1971), p. 26.

flowed spilled by the swords of the enemies
We lament graves, but had we lamented other graves
We actually intend to lament them.

C. *Smelling in the soil of Ḥusayn's tomb,*[93] *delighting in it and covering one's forehead with it*

Poets would return from their pilgrimage to the shrine of Ḥusayn with some soil from the tomb, which they would throw at family members and friends who asked for it, hoping to be blessed and healed through it.

Al-Ṣanawbarī writes in this connection:[94]

أنيخا بنا العيسى في كربلاء مناخ البلاد مناخ الكرب
نشم ممسّك ذاك الثرى ونلثم كافور تلك الترب

You two [camel leaders] make your camels kneel down at Karbalāʾ
The way-station of the land, the way-station of grief.
So that we smell the musk of that soil
And kiss the camphor of that earth.

In the opening lines of his poem, Al-Ṣanawbarī imitates the ancient poets of Arabia, using expressions and structures commonly encountered in *Jāhiliyya* poetry. This is the case with the opening phrase, "you two make your camels kneel down." The poet addresses two of his friends and asks them to make a stop in their journey and descend from their camels in order to smell the musk- and camphor-like smell of the soil of Karbalāʾ. These lines show the obvious influence of Imruʾ al-Qays, not only in their contents but in the words themselves. Al-Ṣanawbarī clearly followed in the footsteps of his *jāhilī* predecessors. Although his introductory lines are quite brief compared to the introductions in most traditional poems, they do possess a number of elements common to the latter, such as his call on two friends, his mentioning a certain place where they are to stop, and his longing to smell the soil of Karbalāʾ. There is a mixture of traditional and innovative elements. Traditional forms are associated in the poem with other newer forms, for example the soil of Karbalāʾ, which is compared to musk and camphor.

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[93] The soil of Ḥusayn's grave is deemed in Shīʿite literature to possess numerous merits: it can heal any illness, prostration on it is meritorious, it gives rise to Divine majesty and security from all fear, it is put in the shroud of the dead, and is a source of blessing for Shiites. For more details, see: Khalid Sindawi, "Holy Earth: The Importance of the Land of Karbalāʾ for the Shīʿa," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 87 (2003), pp. 73-84.

[94] This four-line poem is written in the *mutaqārib* meter. For more detail, see: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalāʾ*, p. 101.

Another poet, ʿAlī b. Ḥammād al-ʿAdwī[95] (d. toward the end of the fourth century AH/1009 CE), asked the pilgrim to circle Ḥusayn's tomb and kiss the venerated soil of the grave:[96]

ثمّ طُفْ حول قبره والثم تربة قبر معظّم المقدار

Then walk around his tomb
And kiss the soil of the venerated grave.

The poet Mihyār al-Daylamī[97] (d. 1036 CE) composed two lines of his elegy for ʿAlī and his son Ḥusayn:[98]

وأهدى إليه الزائرون تحيتي لأشرف إن عيني له لم تُشارف
وعادوا فذرّوا بين جنبيّ تربة شفائي مما استحقبوا في المخاوف

And the visitors brought him my greeting
So that I might see [him] as my eyes did not see him.
Then they returned and strew upon me soil
Which heals me, and drives away their fears.

The poet mentions the returning pilgrims who have brought soil from Ḥusayn's grave with them in order to heal him. The soil of the tomb was thus believed to possess powers of healing, as well as of protection for those who carried it.[99]

D. *Poets seek intercession*[100] *and forgiveness for their sins, and the protection of Ḥusayn's Tomb from the adversities of this world*

The poet Ibn Ḥammād al-ʿAdwī wrote:[101]

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[95] His full name is Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ḥammād b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ḥamād al-ʿAdwī al-ʿAbdī al-Baṣrī. For more details, see: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalā'* p. 102; ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Amīnī al-Najafī, *Al-Ghadīr* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 3rd printing, 1967), 4:153-155.

[96] This twelve-line poem is written in the *khafīf* meter. See: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalā'*, pp. 102-103.

[97] See: Ch. Pellat, "Mihyar," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:24-25].

[98] This forty-seven line poem is written in the *ṭawīl* meter. For more details, see: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalā'*, p. 105.

[99] For more on the powers of healing and protection possessed by the soil of Ḥusayn's tomb see, for example: Quṭb al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Saʿīd al-Rāwandī, *Kitāb salwat al-ḥazīn*, better known as *Al-Daʿawāt* (Qumm: Madrasat al-imām al-mahdī, 1st printing, 1986), pp. 186-187, no. 515; Raḍī al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Ṭūsī, *Makārim al-akhlāq* (Qumm: Dār al-sharīf al-Raḍī, 4th printing, 1991), p. 166.

[100] For more on the concept of intercession, see: Annemarie Schimmel, "Shafāʿa," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [9:177-179].

[101] This twelve-line poem is written in the *khafīf* meter. See: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalā'*, pp. 102-103.

لو درى زائر الحسين بما أوجبه ذو الجلال للزوار
فله عفوه ورضوائه عنهم وحطّ الذنوب والأوزار
وتناديهم الملائك قد أعطيتم الأمن من عذاب النار
ويقول الإله جلّ اسمه الأعلى لمن يهبطون في الأخبار
بشّروهم بأنهم أوليائي في أماني وذمّتي وجواري
وخُطاهم محسوبة حسناتٍ وخطاهم عفو من الغفار
وعليه إخلاف ما أنفقوه الضعف من درهم ومن دينار
فإذا زرته فزره بإخباتٍ ونسكٍ وخشيةٍ ووقار
وادع من يسمع الدعاء من الزائر في جهرةٍ وفي إسوار
ويردّ الجواب إذ هو حيّ لم يمت عند ربّه القهار
ثم طُفْ حولَ قبره والثم تربة قبرٍ معظم المقدار
فيه ريحانة النبيّ حسين وذلك الطهر خامس الأطهار

Had the visitors to Ḥusayn truly known what
The Glorious One commanded for them
Then they will be forgiven their sins and their crimes will be pardoned.
The angels will call them and say: you will not be tortured in Hell
And God, may his name be glorified, will say to those who come down with the news:
Give them the good news that they are my friends, under my protection, near me.
Their steps are considered and their sins are pardoned.
He will compensate them double every dirham and dinar they spent.
If you visit him, do so with humility, piety, fear, and respect.
Invoke him who hears the supplication of a pilgrim in public and in private.
He who answers prayers, for he is still alive, did not die, [lives] next to his Victorious Lord.
Then walk around his tomb and kiss the soil of a highly venerated grave.
Where the sweet basil of the prophet, Ḥusayn, the pure, the fifth pure one [from the holy family].

The poet enumerates the merits and rewards of visiting Ḥusayn's shrine: forgiveness for one's sins, escape from the fires of Hell, and the protection of God. Every step the pilgrim takes on his pilgrimage to the Shrine of Ḥusayn gives him protection and absolution.

E. *Angels*[102] *visit Ḥusayn's tomb*

In the poetry of pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's shrine angels are described as visiting the tomb in groups; when one ascends another descends. The angels are said to declare that pilgrims to the shrine have been given exemption from the fires of Hell.

Ibn Ḥammād, for example, says in the seventh line of one of his poems:[103]

قبور عليها النّور يزهو وعندها صعود لأملاك السما ونزول

Tombs over which light gleams brightly and by them
Angels of Heaven alight and ascend.

In another of his poems he says:[104]

لو درى زائر الحسين بما أوجبه ذو الجلال للزوّار
فله عفوه ورضوانه عنهم وحطّ الذنوب والأوزار
وتناديهم الملائك قد أعطيتم الامن من غذاب النار

[102] Angels play a number of roles in the literature on pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's shrine. The sources mention the following story involving the role of angels in the story of Ḥusayn: the angels asked God to permit them to fight side-by-side with Ḥusayn in the battle of Karbalā'; God gave them permission to do so, but when they came down from Heaven they found that Íusayn already had been killed. Then angels then scolded God and asked Him why he let them go down to fight for Ḥusayn when he was in fact already dead and God had already taken his spirit. God replied that they should remain at the dome of his tomb and cry over him and over their failure to help him; God further revealed to them that at the End of Time when Ḥusayn would be resurrected, they would be his companions and fight alongside him. See: Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 88.

According to one tradition, the angels in question numbered four-thousand (and seventy-thousand according to another). They are named "the people of al-Ḥā'ir" (Al-Ḥā'ir being one of the names of Ḥusayn's tomb). According to Ibn Qawlaway (*Kāmil al-ziyārāt* p. 86), these angels, looking unkempt and dusty, are in charge of Ḥusayn's tomb. They beseech God to pardon him and pray at the grave. Such an angel's prayer is worth one-thousand human prayers. Pilgrims to the shrine are granted the merits of these prayers. The angels greet the pilgrim on his arrival and bid him farewell when he leaves, protecting him from demons and humans alike. If a pilgrim falls ill, the angels heal him, and if he dies, they attend his funeral, and ask God to forgive his sins.

Another kind of angel are the "guardians" (*ḥafaẓa*), who mourn Ḥusayn every day from sunrise to sunset. At sunset, four-thousand angels descend and four-thousand angels ascend to weep over Ḥusayn. See, for example: Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Shaykh, *Al-Malā'ika, ḥaqīqatuhum, wujūduhum, ṣifātuhum* (Tripoli: Jurūs burūs, 1st printing, 1991), pl 48; Maḥmūd Salīm al-Ḥūt, *Fī ṭarīq al-mīthūlūjiyā ʿind al-ʿarab* (Beirut: Dār al-nahār lil-nashr, 3rd printing, 1983), p. 206.

Ḥusayn's mother Fāṭima is also said to cry over her son in Heaven, and one-million cherubim angels cry with her. When she sighs, all the angels of Heaven sigh with her. See: Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 87.

[103] This fifty-eight line poem is written in the *ṭawīl* meter. See: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalā'*, po. 103; Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kirbāssī, *Dā'irat al-maʿārif al-ḥusayniyya: Dīwān al-qarn al-rābiʿ*, second part (London: Hussaini Centre for Research, 1st printing, 1997), pp. 120-126; Al-Ṭurayḥī, *Al-Muntakhab*, pp. 34-36.

[104] See fn. 109 above.

Had the visitors to Ḥusayn truly known what
The Glorious One commanded for them
Then they will be forgiven their sins and their crimes will be pardoned.
The angels will call them and say: you will not be tortured in Hell

F. *It is the duty of every Shiite to make the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's Tomb*[105]

Al-Ṣanawbarī exhorts his two travel companions[106] to rein in their camels and make a stop at Karbalāʾ, "the land of grief,"[107] in order to perform the pilgrimage to the shrine of Ḥusayn:

أنيخا بنا العيسى في كربلاءً مناخ البلاد مناخ الكرب

You two [camel leaders] make your camels kneel down at Karbalāʾ
The way-station of the land, the way-station of grief.

And elsewhere:

وتقضي زيارة قبر بها فإن زيارته تستحب

Perform the visit to the tomb there
For visiting the shrine is a desirable deed.

In the poem which the poet Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā[108] wrote on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ in the year 1038 CE, pilgrimage to the shrine is perceived to be a religious duty:[109]

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[105] See, for example: Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 146.

[106] Al-Ṣanawbarī is the only one of the pilgrimage poets to have adopted the opening style of ancient, pre-Islamic poetry, and put it to novel use. Strangely enough, this example of his was not followed by other Shiite poets who wrote about the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's Shrine, in contrast to the great poets of the age.

[107] Karbalāʾ has been associated since earliest times with the death of Ḥusayn, a fact made easier by the folk-etymology of the name Karbalāʾ (*karb* = grief + *balāʾ* = misfortune). This was thus a name which was easily applied to the site of the horrific tragedy of the death of Ḥusayn and his family.

Numerous traditions exist in which Shiite imams associate the name of Karbalāʾ with tragedy and misfortune. For more detail on such traditions see, for example: Ismāʿīl Ibn Kuthayr, *Istishhād al-Ḥusayn*, with an introduction by Jamīl Ghāzī (Cairo: Dār al-Madanī, 1985), p. 126; Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Manqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, edited by ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1990), p. 142; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs, *Al-Malāḥim wal-fitan* (Al-Najaf: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-ḥaydariyya, 1365/1945), pp. 92-93; Abū Makhnaf (Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn wa-maṣraʿ ahl baytihi wa-aṣḥābihi fī Karbalāʾ* (Al-Najaf, 1347/1929), pp. 48-49; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as Al-Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Amālī al-Ṣadūq* (Teheran: Al-Maktaba al-islāmiyya, 4th printing, 1404/1983), p. 128, no. 1; Muḥammad b. al-Fattāl al-Naysābūrī, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn* (Qumm: Dār al-raḍī lil-nashr, 1386/1966), 1:169; Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb al-Māzindarānī, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-ʿallāma lil-nashr, 1989/1969), 4:86; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl* (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 2nd printing, 1367/1947), p. 444.

[108] For details on the poet, see: C. Brockelman, "al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [7:634].

[109] This five-line poem is written in the *majzūʾ khafīf* meter. For more details, see: Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalāʾ*, p. 105.

فسقى الله قبورًا لهم العذاب الفضيضا
وإلى أن يقول:
واليهن يشدُّ القوم هاتيك الفُروضا
ما نحوهنّ لندبٍ إنّما قضوا فروضا

May God irrigate graves
With flowing sweet water.

And:

And people are drawn there to that religious duty
They did not go there to mourn but to fulfill an obligation

G. *Details of the pilgrimage ceremony*

The important acts performed by the pilgrim at the shrine, such as invocations, walking around the tomb, and kissing the earth at the site, are mentioned in the following lines by Ibn Ḥammād:[110]

فإن زرته فزره بإخباتٍ ونسكٍ وخشيةٍ ووقار
وادع من يسمع الدعاء من الزائر في جهرةٍ وفي إسوار
ثم طف حول قبره والتثم تربة قبرٍ معظم المقدار

If you visit him, do so with humility, piety, fear, and respect.
Invoke him who hears the supplication of a pilgrim in public and in private.
Then walk around his tomb and kiss the soil of a highly venerated grave.

H. *Prayers for rainfall on Ḥusayn's tomb and the soil of Karbalā'*

It is a well-known fact that the classical Arab elegy ends in an invocation for rain to fall on the tomb of the deceased after the burial. This is a recurring motif from the *Jāhiliyya* period onward. In fact, it became a common practice to sprinkle water over a new grave, in order to pacify the "crown" (*hāma*) or the "echo" (*ṣadā*)[111] so that the departed spirit might find rest; or due to a belief that the dead lead a life after death that is similar to their previous existence, and that they therefore become thirsty and must drink;[112] or out of a belief that water refreshes the dead person's body and

[110] For more details on the poem, see fn. 109 above.

[111] These are the names of a bird that hovers over the deceased's head and does not cease to cry "water me!, water me!," until the man's death is avenged. For details, see: Jawād ʿAlī, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fīī taʾrīkh al-ʿArab qabla al-islām* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-nahḍa, 2nd printing, 1993), 6:139-141.

[112] See: Anwar Abū Suwaylim, *Al-Maḍar fi al-shiʿr al-jāhilī* (Amman: Dār ʿAmmār, Beirut: Dār al-jīl, 1987), p. 80; Muṣṭafā al-Shūrī, *Shiʿr al-rithāʾ fī al-ʿaṣr al-jāhilī* (Cairo: Al-Sharika

spirit. For these reasons, the Arabs since the times of the *Jāhiliyya* have had the custom of making the top of the grave hollow and bowl-like, or of leaving it covered only with earth, with no overlying stone, so that the buried body may become wet from the rain and the spirit find its rest.

The "pilgrimage poets" mention the invocation for irrigating Ḥusayn's grave. For example, the poet ʿAuf b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Aḥmar al-Kūfī[113] (d. after 122 AH) writes in the thirty-seventh line of his poem:[114]

سقى الله قبرًا ضمن المجد والتقى بغربية الطّفِ الغمام الغواديا

May God irrigate the tomb that embraces glory and piety
West of al-Ṭaff With rain-bearing clouds.

Al-Qāsim b. Yūsuf al-Kātib says in his poem's opening lines:[115]

سلّم على قبر الحسين وقل صلى عليك الله من قبر
وسقاك صوب الغاديات ولا زالت عليك روائح تسري

Greet Ḥusayn's tomb and say
May God pray on you, what a grave you are!
Passing clouds will irrigate you and
A breeze will still pass over you by night.

Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā opens his five-line poem as:[116]

فسقى الله قبورًا لهم العذب القضيضا

May God irrigate graves
With flowing sweet water.

The language of pilgrimage poetry

"Pilgrimage poets" attempt to refrain from using obscure and strange expressions. Their language is in general clear and easily understood, with little use of rhetorical images. Furthermore, there is a similarity in the expressions and images used by the various poets. I believe that there are a number of reasons for this:

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al-miṣriyya al-ʿālamiyya lil-nashr – Longman, 1995), p. 109; Suzanne Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 178-179.

[113] See: Qanāziʿ, "ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAwf," pp. 333-342.

[114] This fifty-two line poem is written in the *ṭawīl* meter. See: Qanāziʿ, "ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAwf," pp. 344-3482.

[115] This is a forty-nine line poem composed in the *kāmil* meter. See fn. 91 above.

[116] For more on this poem, see fn. 116 above.

A. The motif of Ḥusayn's shrine as a site of pilgrimage is relatively recent in Arabic poetry. Therefore, the various schools of Arabic poetry did not develop a specific style for this kind of poem. Furthermore, the kind of pilgrimage involved was not something which any one poet chose as his theme, but rather was a motif which attracted every Shiite poet. Visiting the shrine of Ḥusayn is an act every Shiite wishes to perform. It is therefore no wonder that as a motif, it has been treated in clear and simple language.
B. Shiite poets who wrote about the pilgrimage were not concerned with exhibiting their poetic talents as was the case with poems on other topics. Their only concern was to serve the cause of visiting the shrine and to eulogize Ḥusayn in a manner that would be accessible to the general public. The motivation behind writing these poems was that this pilgrimage was and is considered an act of piety and an expression of adherence to the instructions of the imams, discussed at the beginning of this paper. For this reason, the poems are couched in a language which is at once clear and grammatically pure, despite its narrative nature and its proximity to colloquial usage. Furthermore, most "pilgrimage poets" did not possess a literary education that went beyond the metrics of poetry, even when compared to other poets of their times. Their poems were thus relatively simple.
C. It is in the nature of pilgrimage poetry that the poems are usually created in an impromptu[117] manner, and this naturally leads to the use of relatively simple linguistic structures and a focus on the merits of Ḥusayn himself and the reward awaiting pilgrims to his shrine, rather than on linguistic purity. For that reason, these poems are devoid of artificiality and rhetorical images. In fact, many of these poems give the impression of having been composed on the spot, demonstrating their authors' talents at improvisation, inspired by the topic and the need to come up quickly with an appropriate verse.

[117] Ibn al-Rashīq makes a distinction between impromptu poetry (*irtijāl*) and improvisation (*badīhiyya*). The former consists, in his opinion, of composing verses on a particular occasion or under particular circumstances, in a continuous style, quickly and without any prior preparation. When a poet improvises, on the other hand, he has a moment to think before composing every few lines of verse. This kind of poetry is also composed on a particular occasion or under particular circumstances. See: Ibn al-Rashīq Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan al-Qayrawānī, *Al-ʿUmda fī maḥāsin al-shiʿr wa-ādābihi*, edited by Muḥammad Qazqazān (Beirut: Dār al-maʿrifa, 1988), 1:351-361. I do not distinguish between the two.

The form and artistic structure of pilgrimage poetry

Most of the poems in question are short verses, not exceeding ten lines. This may well be due to the fact that most such poems are composed on the spur of the moment for a specific occasion. Each poem is thus connected to some particular event which aroused the poetic instinct. This is why pilgrimage poets do not make use of classical openings such as descriptions of an abandoned camp or the remembrance of a loved one long gone (with the exception of Al-Ṣanawbarī)[118] but come directly to the main point of the poem. As a result, these poems are relatively uniform in theme and realistic descriptions.[119] Pilgrimage poetry treated neither love nor politics, and was therefore usually lacking in traditional poetic themes. The poets in question were not professionals, and their compositions served the purpose of declaring and disseminating a position, a thought or a way of behavior. Furthermore, the poems were not recited at official public events, as happened in the courts of the caliphs and governors' palaces. For all these reasons, the poems, whether called *qaṣīda* or *maqṭūʿa*,[120] were usually short, not exceeding a few lines.

Conclusion

Poetry about the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's Shrine began to be composed after his tragic death. Poets were encouraged by Shiite imams to write

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[118] See the section on "Breathing in the soil of Ḥusayn's tomb" in the present paper, as well as fn. 114 above.

[119] For more details on the issue of the unity of theme in poetry, see, for example: J.G. Van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982).

[120] Scholars disagree on the boundary between a full-length poem (*qaṣīda*) and a short verse (*maqṭūʿa*). Some modern scholars follow in the footsteps of the ancients and propose a purely quantitative distinction based on the number of lines, so that whatever exceeded that number would be considered a *qaṣīda* and any work that did not reach the required number of lines would be considered a *maqṭūʿa*. The boundary between the two types is taken to be seven lines by some scholars, eleven by others. For more details, see, for example: Wahīb Rūmiyya, *Bunyat al-qaṣīda ḥattā nihāyat al-ʿaṣr al-umawī* (the panegyric poem as an example) (Damascus: Dār Saʿd al-Dīn lil-ṭibāʿa wal-nashr wal-tawzīʿ, 1997), pp. 15-16; Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *Al-ʿUmda fī naqd al-shiʿr wa-tamḥīṣihi*, with a commentary by Dr. ʿAfīf Nayif Ḥāḍūm (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1st printing, 2003), p. 164; Rashīd al-Yaḥyāwī, *Al-Shiʿriyya al-ʿarabiyya, al-anwāʿ wal-aghrāḍ* (Morocco: Ifrīqiyā al-sharq, 1991), pp. 11-15; Jawdat Fakhr al-Dīn, *Shakl al-qaṣīda al-ʿarabiyya fī al-naqd al-ʿarabī ḥattā al-qarn al-thāmin al-hijrī* (Beirut: Dār al-ḥarf al-lubnānī and Dār al-Manāhil, 1995), p. 33; Jamāl al-Dīn b. al-Shaykh, *Al-Shiʿriyya al-ʿarabiyya*, trans. by Mubārak Ḥanūn, Muḥammad al-Wālī and Muḥammad Awrāgh (Morocco: Dār Tūbqāl lil-nashr, 1996), pp. 150-156; F. Drenkow and G. Lecomte, "Ḳaṣīda," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [4:713-714]; Renate Jacobi, "Qaṣīda," *The Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature*, eds. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starky (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 2:630-633.

about visiting the shrine, and so developed a special type of verse that came to be known as "pilgrimage poetry," a genre of religious, doctrinal verse that calls on believers to visit the shrine at Karbalāʾ and describes the purpose of the pilgrimage, the various types of visit, and the customs involved, including the composition of poems during the pilgrimage itself, a custom which Shiite imams encouraged.

Pilgrimage poetry became a viable genre despite the obstacles which the rulers of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties placed on the performance of the pilgrimage. During the first century AH, the number of poems was small, and the poems themselves quite short, due to the aforementioned obstacles. These poems made only brief mention of some of the customs or purposes of the pilgrimage, such as, mourning the death of Ḥusayn, breathing in the blessed soil of the tomb, asking for one's sins to be forgiven, praying for rain to fall on the tomb, or mentioning the angels who visited the shrine and protected its visitors.

As for the poems' style, most are quite simple, with little use of imaginative images. The language in which the poems are couched is also simple, since they all deal with one theme, and are meant as exhortations for the general Shiite public to encourage all to perform the pilgrimage to the shrine. For this reason, too, most of the poems are of the short type (*maqṭūʿa*), and are composed in response to a specific event on a specific occasion.

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Jesus and Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The paper provides a comparative analysis of the figure of Christ as depicted in the New Testament and that of Ḥusayn as reflected in Shīʿite literature. We show that both figures meet in nearly every respect the expectations from saintly figures: Ḥusayn like Jesus was born after a miraculous pregnancy and his birth was accompanied by visions and prophecies; both Ḥusayn and Jesus had supernatural powers and knowledge, such as prescience; both performed numerous miracles; both demonstrated moral authority and courage; both gave their lives for the sake of humanity and died for their faith; and both came to life again after their death and ascended to heaven, to abide in God's lap.[*]

Preface

A reader of the biography of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī, the grandson of the prophet Muḥammad, (d. 680), especially the latter events of his life, will discover considerable a considerable number of similarities between Ḥusayn's background and characteristics and those of other great prophets and apostles, from among the reader's own people and among other peoples as well.

The Shīʿa[1] authors sought similarities between Ḥusayn and his grandfather the prophet on one hand, and between him and the prophets of other

[*] I am indebted to Prof. J. Sadan, Prof. G. Kanazi and Dr. Aviva Broushi for their helpful comments on this article.

[1] Shīʿa and Shīʿī refer throughout this article to Imāmī (Twelver) Shīʿism.

religions, that would emphasize his sainthood. A saint is supposed to represent the perfection of human qualities: he is, simultaneously, a great general, a messenger from on high, a seer foretelling the future and a miracle worker. The Shīʿite authors were influenced by Jesus' biography, finding in it all the necessary attributes characterizing the likeness of a saint; they chose certain details from his life and introduced them into their compositions, altering them to suit their audience and dressing them in Shīʿite Islamic style.

This article will focus on the outstanding characteristics of the saint, such as miraculous birth, superior moral qualities, supernatural abilities, ability to work miracles and to see the future, and self sacrifice and martyrdom. In all these categories there are great similarities between Jesus the Christian savior and Ḥusayn, the Moslem ʾimām.

The Twelve ʾImāms

Before we open the discussion of Ḥusayn's character, let us note that the phenomenon of bestowal of a holy nature on the great men of Islam is not new. The Shīʿites believe that their ʾimāms, including Ḥusayn, are the successors of the prophets, and stress the continuity of prophecy in order to transmit *waṣiyya* (testament) from the prophets to the ʾimāms in a continuous dynasty. The prophets include ʾĀdam (Adam), Noah, ʾIbrāhīm (Abraham), Mūsa (Moses), ʿĪsā (Jesus) and Muḥammad.

The ʾimāms are considered to possess the divine prophetic testament of the early prophets which was transmitted to Muḥammad as well when his time came to appear as a prophet. In this context the Shīʿa sees the ʾimāms as part of the eternal dynasty of the chosen who appeared continuously in the world since Adam. Each in his own generation carried the spiritual-prophetic testament and passed it on to his successors before his death. This dynasty, the earliest of whom are the forefathers of the world, and which includes the prophets, their students and their disciples, preserves the continuity from one prophet to the next. According to Shīʿite understanding, this dynasty continues from Muḥammad to the last of the prophets; their heirs, Muḥammad's successors, are the Shīʿite ʾimāms.

The ʾimāms are endowed with supernatural abilities, they are of a higher order than ordinary men, they perform miracles, they know all the holy books and are familiar with hidden lore. Some of the ʾimāms' knowledge originates with the prophets and was received from them directly; other knowledge was acquired by the ʾimāms by reading secret writings or from dreams through which angels' words were transmitted; more reached the

'imāms from the stories of the Children of Israel, and from the Old and New Testaments. Thus the 'imāms' sources of knowledge are many and varied and includes all the secrets of the world. They are obligated to continue to transmit this heritage from 'imām to 'imām.[2]

The route of transmission of the *waṣiyya*[3] from one 'imām to the next is subject to continuous divine providence. Moreover, God transmits the secrets of the universe to these chosen since the time of creation and until Judgement Day.

How the Image of a Saint is Shaped

The authors of the Shī'a thus found in the stories of the prophets a broad area from which to draw exceptional characteristics to bestow upon the Shī'ite 'imāms. For this purpose they created a new literary genre, 'Proofs of the *'Imāma*,' (*Dalā'il al-'Imāma*) whose main purpose was to endow the great personalities of Islam with characteristics of prophets and saints. Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī falls into this category.

With respect to Jesus Christ, an extensive literature was created around his life and death, his vocation, and his suffering, starting from fragments appearing in Flavius Josephus's works, subsequent expansion and development of the Epistles of Paul – the earliest documents of Christian literature – and culminating in the canonical Evangels and the works of the church fathers.[4]

The canonical Evangels were not written as historical documents but rather in order to spread and strengthen the new faith, as is evidenced by its name ('Evangel' means Gospel). Similarly, 'Proofs of the *'Imāma*,' written for the purpose of glorifying the 'imāms and attributing to them abilities of prophets, commonly with no connection to, or even contradicting, historical fact.

Another literature to be considered is hagiography, which played a significant role in the spiritual and intellectual life of the Middle Ages. To a certain extent the roots of our literature can be found in hagiography, which exists to this day in folk literature.[5] This literature possesses unique elements, such as:

[2] Al-Majlisī 1983, p. 23:273.

[3] On *waṣiyya* (testament) see for example: Amir-Moezzi 1994, pp. 41–43.
See also Al-Mas'ūdī 1954.

[4] More on Christian sources and non-Christian sources relating to Jesus Christ, see in Klausner 1999, pp. 86–99.

[5] Boyer 1988.

Place and time in hagiography are not defined, the story is universal and could have taken place in any place or time. Importance is placed only on the place in which the saint dies, or the location of relics. We will find that the literature that relates Ḥusayn's as well as Jesus' praises attributes supreme importance to the place and manner of death.

Moreover, the character of a saint is defined by uniform lines. The monk, the virgin the bishop and the ʾimām all fall into the same category. They display identical characteristics, and all that we know about them is their symbolic significance. The authors of hagiography model and refine their heroes, endowing them with superior qualities. Among the characteristics of the saints are

1. Origin – of a noble or important family;
2. Birth – usually accompanied by a miraculous event or prophecy;
3. Characteristics – the saint displays such qualities as righteousness, moral authority, courage, heroism, great wisdom;
4. An extraordinary event – sometimes death and resurrection;
5. Self-sacrifice and martyrdom;
6. His relics or remains play an important role among his followers;
7. The saint performs miracles both during his life and after his death.

Thus we see before us a regular and repeating scheme. Extraordinary events and exceptional moral qualities are essential elements of this literature. Various saints do the same things and behave in similar manner under similar circumstances. Even the miracles are identical, or at least very similar. The saint almost always finds his death through self-sacrifice.[6]

We will now examine the characteristics of Ḥusayn and of Jesus according to the scheme defining the saintly character described above.

Comparing Ḥusayn and Jesus

The central element through which the Shīʿites connect Jesus and Ḥusayn is that both are counted among the chosen and constitute outstanding models. We have therefore chosen to survey the similarities between the two according to the following characteristics:

1. Miraculous pregnancy and birth
2. Supernatural powers and performance of miracles
3. Premonition of the time and place of death
4. The manner of death
5. After death

[6] A slightly different and more interesting formula in defining the image of a saint can be found in Campbell book, 1956.

Miraculous Pregnancy and Birth

Stories about people born of the holy spirit are common among ancient peoples. Cupid was the son of the goddess Venus, Prometheus was the son of a god who descended from heaven to earth, Plato's mother was impregnated by the god Apollo before her husband knew her; several of the Roman caesars attributed their parentage to the gods, and if we visit the Far East we will find that at 600 BC, stories about Buddha are similar. An angel announced to the Buddha's mother that she would bear a son, and it is said of her that she became pregnant through the agency of the holy spirit;[7] and biblical messianic prophecies also suggest miraculous birth: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son …"[8]

Ḥusayn's birth was also strange and wonderful, and special signs foretell his advent. It is said that he was born only six months after his mother Fāṭima al-Zahrā' became pregnant, and his birth took place on *'Āshūrā'* Day. On precisely the same day, 57 years later, he was killed, on the 10th day of the month of *Muḥarram*, in the 61st year of the Hegira (10.10.680).

When the Virgin Mary was six months pregnant the angel Gabriel was sent to her to announce that she would give birth to Jesus:

> And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph … and the virgin's name was Mary … and the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest … then Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.[9]

Likewise Ḥusayn's mother, Fāṭima, daughter of the prophet, was a virgin when she gave birth to him![10]

Additional similarities: During Fāṭima's pregnancy with Ḥusayn the angel Gabriel revealed himself together with a thousand celestial angels to the prophet Muḥammad in order to congratulate him on the expected birth of his grandson Ḥusayn. On the day of Ḥusayn's birth, angels descended in ranks to extol and glorify his birth.

[7] Shaddai 2000, p. 30.
[8] Isaiah 7:14, King James Version.
[9] Luke 1:26–38.
[10] Ibn Ṭāwūs 1950, p.10; Al-Tustarī 1994, p. 369; Ayoub 1978, p. 35.

On Jesus' birthday, angels praising God descended from heaven to greet him.[11]

Mary the mother of Jesus is known as "the Immaculate Virgin," and the literature of the West praises her extravagantly. Shīʿite literature heaps praises upon Fāṭima, and it is told that in her virtues, piety and family's nobility she was outstanding among women, and that she devoted her life to God.[12]

An additional element is that God names the baby. When Gabriel announced Mary's pregnancy to her, he said, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."[13] Jesus' name was thus chosen by God. In many places in Shīʿite literature it is mentioned that God gave Ḥusayn his name, and instructed his grandfather the prophet Muḥammad to call him by this name.[14]

Ḥusayn's birth, like Jesus', was thus a miraculous birth, a birth of true holiness, to a virgin mother, announced by special signs. This birth, befitting a model of a holy character, appears in stories about the two personalities.

To the miraculous pregnancy and birth can be added the motif of speech in the cradle.

It is said of Jesus that he spoke while still a babe in the cradle; Ḥusayn did not speak while an infant, but caused another infant to speak: in one of the traditions according to Ṣafwān Ibn Mahrān, it says: two people began arguing about the baby's paternity; each claimed that the baby was his son. Ḥusayn, who was passing by, heard the argument, addressed the baby and said to him, "Speak with permission of God, may he be praised." Then the baby opened its mouth and said, "I am not the son of either of these two; I am the son of a shepherd from such and such a tribe."[15]

Ḥusayn performs a miracle by causing the babe in its cradle to speak. We will therefore continue to the next point of comparison, dealing with miracles performed by Ḥusayn and Jesus.

Supernatural Powers and Performance of Miracles

Jesus and Ḥusayn are both known for the miracles that they performed. Ḥusayn worked miracles both during his life and after his death, through the agency of his decapitated head. Ḥusayn's head is able to speak, and in-

[11] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 125.
[12] Ibn Namā 1899, p. 3; Luke 38:26; Qur'ān 19:45.
[13] Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21.
[14] See for example: Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 126.
[15] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1991, 4:59.

fluences events around him after his murder. Jesus impresses both his believers and opponents by the miracles he performs. Let us take, for example, the miracle of healing by touching. The text of Matthew 9 relates:

> And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made the whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.[16]

Deliverance through touch appears also in the traditions about Ḥusayn. In this case the healer is the angel Fiṭris, who failed to perform the task commanded him by God, and as punishment his wings were broken and he was cast onto a deserted island.

When Ḥusayn was born, Fiṭris begged the angel Gabriel to bring him with him to congratulate the prophet Muḥammad on the birth of his grandson. Gabriel bore Fiṭris there, and when they arrived they told the prophet Fiṭris's story. The prophet said to him, "Touch the newborn babe." Fiṭris did so and immediately flew up to heaven; his wings were healed.[17]

Another supernatural characteristic is the light shining from them: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[18]

The term 'light' in the New Testament incorporates a messianic message and tidings of redemption. This message is evident in Jesus' words to his disciples:

> Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you … While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.[19]

It is said of Ḥusayn

> When God desired to create Ḥusayn, first He formed light, and then He formed soul, and from the mixture of light and soul Ḥusayn was created. Moreover, the light of Ḥusayn was created from the light of God.[20]

Light shone from Ḥusayn while he was still in his mother's womb. When Fāṭima became pregnant, her father the prophet said to her, "I see a light before your face; you will give birth to an 'imām of this nation." His

[16] Matthew 9:20–22.

[17] Al-Majlisī 1983, 40:249. It should be noted that the Shī'ite 'imāms were gifted with the power of healing by touching the sick. For example, see Al-Ṭabarī 1992, pp. 187, 190, 200, 213, 283, 341, 403, and 420.

[18] John 8:12; 12:46.

[19] John 1:9, 8:12, 12:35–36.

[20] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 50, 100.

daughter answered, "Since I conceived I have had no need for a lamp to illuminate the darkness …"[21]

In both cases, the light bursting forth from them is a symbolic, metaphoric light meant to transmit a messianic message.

It should be noted that the motif of prophetic light is very common in religious literature in general and in Shīʿite literature in particular. Many stories can be found in Shīʿite sources about the light of ʾĀdam that glowed on the Seth's forehead, and about the garments of light given to him; likewise the pillar of light that appeared at the birth of ʾIbrāhīm, which aroused the amazement of the angels, is mentioned.

In Islamic tradition light constitutes one of the conspicuous signs of Muḥammad's prophecy and mission.[22] The expressions 'light' and 'true light' appear in the New Testament more than twenty times, showing us the importance of this prophetic symbol in Christian tradition.

Premonition of the Time and Place of Death

Ḥusayn, like the other ʾimāms according to Shīʿite tradition, knew the day of his death in advance, as well as the place of his murder and the manner of his death.[23] When Ḥusayn reached Karbalā' he said, "O God, here I gaze in sorrow and catastrophe (*karb wa-balā*), for here our blood will be spilt, here is the place of our battle, I know of this place from my grandfather."[24] Jesus also knew the time and manner of his death in advance, and even told his disciples so: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."[25]

Before his death Jesus asked the women of Jerusalem not to weep for him and not to lament over him when he died.[26] Likewise, before Ḥusayn departed for the final battle at Karbalā' he asked his wives and sisters not to weep for him, nor to tear their clothes, nor to cut their cheeks in mourning after his death.[27]

After the hour of his death was made known to him, Jesus went out alone and prayed. He asked God to diminish the burden of his punishment: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: neverthe-

[21] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 35.
[22] For details, see Kohlberg 1987a, p. 15; Rubin 1975, pp. 62–119.
[23] For details see: Sindawi 2000, pp. 323–24; For more detail, see, for example: Al-Ṭabarī 1992, pp. 231, 306.
[24] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p.77.
[25] Matthew 26:2.
[26] Luke 23:28.
[27] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 13–15.

less not as I will, but as thou wilt."[28] The night before his murder, when he knew that the time of his death was approaching, Ḥusayn also prayed the well-known prayer *Salāt al-Khawf* (prayer in time of trouble).

Ḥusayn also knew exactly who would kill him: at the end of the Battle of Karbalā' between Ḥusayn and Umayyad army, when Shimir ibn dhī al-Jawshan approached him in order to decapitate him, Ḥusayn requested that he "remove the disguise from his face so that I and see it and look at you." Shimir consented to Ḥusayn's request and removed the disguise, and his face appeared leprous and his eyes blind, with the chin of a dog and the hair of a pig. Then Ḥusayn said, "My grandfather was right and spoke the truth when he told my father, 'O 'Alī, this son will be killed by a leprous and blind man with the chin of a dog and the hair of a pig.'"[29]

Like him, Jesus knew with certainty who would betray him and the man's description:

"Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me … Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."[30] Later, when the Greeks approached to arrest Jesus, he said to his disciples, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.[31]

It should be noted that premonition does not lead either Jesus or Ḥusayn to try to avoid their respective fates. On the contrary: when Ḥusayn concludes that his life is about to end he behaves accordingly and ignores the advice of his comrades and supporters suggesting that he not go to Iraq. He takes his death upon himself.

Similarly, during the last supper Jesus declares to his disciples that he is about to sacrifice himself for the sake of the victory of faith, and that he will die in order to save mankind. They both willingly took upon themselves the role of sacrificial victim and their death as salvation for mankind.

The Manner of Death

Jesus' belief in himself as a redeemer and savior did not help him on the day of his death. When Jesus was arrested by his enemies they bound him, and one of the people rose and jeered at him, saying, If you are really Jesus, then save yourself.[32] The same thing happened to Ḥusayn when Shimir came to cut off his head.[33]

[28] Matthew 26:39, 42.
[29] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 95.
[30] Matthew 26:21–25.
[31] *Ibid.*, v. 45. This verse is repeated in Mark 14:42.
[32] Matthew 27:40.
[33] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 94.

When Jesus was trapped and in distress among his enemies, he said "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"[34] It is likewise written that Ḥusayn could have defeated his enemies had he wanted to, but he chose martyrdom.

There are more similarities: Jesus and Ḥusayn were both killed on Fridays; both were stabbed when they died.[35] The New Testament tells that the priests promised Judas Iscariot a sum of 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus and hand him over to them.[36] The *Maqātil* tells that Caliph Yazīd promised *badra* [10,000 dirhams] to whoever would bring him Ḥusayn's head.

The deaths of the two were unusual. Regarding Ḥusayn special importance is attributed to the fact that he was killed on ʿĀshūrā' Day, the 10th day of the month of Muḥarram, and some traditions claim that he was born on the same day, contradicting the historical record. Not by chance was Ḥusayn murdered on that day. On ʿĀshūrā' Day many fateful events took place: God created the heavens, the royal throne, and the stars; He created man, father Abraham was born; Noah's ark landed on Mt. Arrarat (al-Jūdī); He split the sea before Moses and the Children of Israel passed through on dry ground, Jonah (Yūnis) emerged from the belly of the whale, and ʿĀshūrā' Day will be the Day of Judgement and resurrection of the dead.

According to Shīʿite belief Jesus was born, and ascended to heaven, on ʿĀshūrā' Day.[37]

If we examine the above events as if they took place on ʿĀshūrā' Day, even if this is not so historically, we will see that most involved prophets or disciples, and are connected with deliverance from adversity. The births and deaths of the two thus occurred on a most momentous day for the world.

A unique motif worthy of mention in the manner of their deaths is that of thirst. Both Jesus and Ḥusayn were thirsty when they died. The motif of Ḥusayn's and his followers' thirst is repeated a number of times in *Maqātil* literature, and describes the acute need of Ḥusayn and his family to drink from the Euphrates River at the time of the Battle of Karbalā'.

The reason for the intense thirst is in the historical record: the governor of Kūfa and Baṣra, ʿUbaydallāh Ibn Ziyād, ordered his men to prevent Ḥusayn, his family and subjects from approaching the Euphrates River. For this purpose two army units were ordered to block the approaches to the

[34] Matthew 26:53.

[35] Mark 15:42–43. See also: Al-Majlisī 1983, 44:199, John 19:34; Ibn Namā 1899, pp. 69–70.

[36] *Ibid.,* Matthew 26:14–16.

[37] ʾAkhṭab Khawārizim 1948, p. 3–4.

Euphrates and the canals carrying water from it. When Ḥusayn's and his people's thirst became agonizing, Ḥusayn made a pleading speech recounting his family's virtues and merits, especially those of his grandfather the prophet Muḥammad, but to no avail.

When Ḥusayn's son ʿAlī, who was fighting at his side, spoke of his great thirst, his father replied, "How it grieves me that I cannot help you … In a short while you will meet your grandfather the prophet Muḥammad in heaven, and he will quench your thirst with the most faithful cup, and you will sip from it and never thirst again.[38]

Before his soul left his body, Ḥusayn asked his murderer, "If you must kill me, permit me to drink a sip of water." His murder refused and mocked him, saying, "In a few minutes you will taste death, sip after sip."[39]

Another warrior of ʿUmar Ibn Saʿd's army, ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-ʾAzdī, scornfully mocked Ḥusayn's plea to drink: "O son of ʾAbū Turāb,[40] do you not claim that your father ʿAlī is in charge of the al-Ḥawḍ spring in Paradise? He will quench the thirst of those who love him; be patient, and in a short time, when you die, your father will give you water from the spring in Paradise."[41]

It is noteworthy that Ḥusayn's father ʿAlī knew that in the future his son would die at Karbalāʾ, that he would die thirsty, that after his death he would reach Paradise and drink one sip from the spring in Paradise – and never thirst again forever.[42]

These words recall Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, in which Jesus said that he who drinks from its water will never thirst again: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."[43]

Moreover, the New Testament stresses that Jesus gave up his spirit while he was thirsty. In fact, thirst brought his death more quickly: "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to

[38] Ibn Namā 1899, pp. 63–64.

[39] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 94.

[40] ʾAbū Turāb is another name for ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib. For details about this name see: Kohlberg 1978b, pp. 347–352. The article was reprinted in the Kohlberg 1996, Chap. 6.

[41] On the al-Ḥawḍ spring in Paradise, see: Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 95; ʾAkhṭab Khawārizim 1948, p. 36; Ibn Ḥanbal, n.d, 3:102, 230.

[42] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 99.

[43] John 4:13–14.

his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed is head and gave up the ghost."[44]

Thus we see that Ḥusayn, like Jesus, will quench his thirst in heaven. Jesus will drink from the eternal cup, while Ḥusayn will drink from spring in Paradise.

An additional noteworthy motif for comparison is the division of the clothing.

After Jesus' death, his killers divided his clothes among them. The soldiers who crucified Jesus took his clothes and divided them four ways, with one portion for each soldier. They also took the coat, but when they saw that it was made of one piece without a seam, "they said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."[45]

Likewise, when Ḥusayn was killed his killers divided his clothes and cast lots for his belongings.[46] This is an outstanding example of the Shīʿite authors attributing to Ḥusayn elements from Jesus' biography in order to make him resemble a holy personality as much as possible.

After Death

After saints' death, heaven and earth themselves mourn together with the forces of nature. This is a characteristic motif appearing frequently in folk legends. Here, when Jesus dies nature is shocked and darkness spread over the face of the entire earth: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."[47]

Maqātil literature mentions many similar natural phenomena taking place after Ḥusayn's death. The earth quaked and trembled, and the mountains began to collapse.[48] Extraordinary events took place in the heavens as well, and blood rained down. Many traditions describe the sky turning

[44] John 19:28–30; Matthew 27:48.

[45] John 19:23–24 according to Psalms 22:18.

See also: Ibn Ṭawūs 1950, pp. 68–72; ʾAkhṭab Khawārizim 1948, p. 37; Ibn Namā 1899, p. 40; Al-Ṭabarī 1991, 3:334.

[46] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1991, 4: 120–121.

[47] Luke 23:44–45; Matthew 27:51–52.

[48] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 95; Ibn Ṭawūs 1950, p. 115; Ibn Namā 1899, p. 62.

dark, the sun eclipsed, stars appearing in the sky during the day, and the moon also eclipsed the same night.[49]

God himself mourns the enormity of the catastrophe of the death of the two. So great is God's grief over the evil of men who killed his chosen ones that he brings the forces of nature into action in his mourning and changes natural laws to evince his sorrow.

As God's chosen, Jesus and Ḥusayn are very close to God and dwell at His right hand. It is said of Jesus: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."[50] Likewise, the Shīʿites believe that Ḥusayn dwells in heaven at the right side of God's throne.[51]

Another important element in comparing the two is the belief that both of them will be resurrected and will return to redeem their people.

Jesus' body was not found in his tomb. When Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome came to anoint his body with spices they saw that the grave was open and a young man dressed in white was sitting in it. "And he said to them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him."[52] Jesus died on Friday and was resurrected three days later, on Sunday. He remained on earth 40 days and afterwards ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God.[53] Sources tell that after Ḥusayn's death his body was carried to the fifth firmament; afterwards he was returned to the ground of Karbalā' and remained there unburied for three days.[54]

According to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Ḥusaynʿs soul left his body and God raised it to Him from his enemies, lest they kill him as had been done to Jesus. Even when Ḥusayn departed for Iraq, God hid within him; and at every spot where Ḥusayn camped on his way the angel Gabriel came to him and spoke to him. Ḥusayn called to the angel Gabriel and asked him, Who am I? Gabriel answered him, You are God, of Whom there is none other living and enduring, Who takes life and resurrects; You are He Who commands heaven and earth and they obey You.[55]

Moreover, claims Jaʿfar, the murderers' hands did not touch even one of the saints. Even the emir of the faithful ʿAlī the father Ḥusayn was not

[49] Ibn Ṭāwūs 1950, p. 66; Ibn Namā 1899, p. 36.
[50] Mark 16:19.
[51] Ibn Qūlawayh 1937, p. 47.
[52] Mark 16:6.
[53] Mark 16:19.
[54] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 37.
[55] Al-Juʿfaī 1978, p.96.

murdered by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam in 661; rather, God carried him to heaven. Thus no Shīʿite ʾimām really dies; God takes them to heaven, just as they did not lay a hand on Jesus (the prophet ʿĪsā).

To summarise, we can conclude the following:

Similarities

- Ḥusayn and Jesus were both born miraculously, of virgins.
- Both were chosen, endowed with inborn abilities and were able to work miracles and to save in time of trouble.
- Both knew the hour of their deaths in advance, and despite this,
- they accepted their deaths in order to redeem mankind.

Differences

- In the New Testament that fact that Jesus is the son of God is stressed repeatedly, while Ḥusayn appears in the sources as a prophet. The identities of his parents and grandparents are known.
- Jesus was begotten by the holy spirit, while Ḥusayn was born of natural parents.
- Jesus was an only child and also the only one in his generation (founder of a dynasty), while Ḥusayn was the offspring of a family of saints (continuation of a dynasty).
- Jesus was resurrected immediately after his death – his body was not found in his grave. Though some believe that Ḥusayn was taken to heaven, there are no dependable sources for this. The more common belief is that he will be resurrected in time.
- Jesus is above any king or messiah, which is not said of Ḥusayn!

The similarities are greater that the differences between these points; in the personalities of the two, their biographies and their deaths. Both Ḥusayn and Jesus sacrificed their lives for the sake of their principles. God put trials before both Ḥusayn and Jesus, and the two are similar in their endurance of the misfortunes placed before them, their unwavering faith, and their tragic ends.

Jesus declared to his disciples that he is about the sacrifice himself for the sake of the victory of the faith. He saw himself as the redeemer of mankind. Likewise Ḥusayn made a similar declaration to his supporters; he also saw himself as a redeemer and sacrificed himself for the Shīʿite faith. He knew that his death, and the tragic manner in which he would be killed, would

bring about the consolidation of the sect and awakening of the Shīʿite believers.

Both became great leaders of their people while they lived, but even more for future generations: Ḥusayn became the founder of the Shīʿite faction in Islam and is considered a saint; and Jesus founded the Christian faith and became a savior and redeemer for the new Christians.

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AL-ḤUSAIN IBN 'ALÎ AND YAḤYÂ IBN ZAKARIYYÂ IN THE SHÎ'ITE SOURCES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

KHALID AHMAD SINDAWI

Introduction

THE researcher who examines the biography of al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alî (d. A.D. 680) in the Shî'ite sources, especially the last years of his life after his departure from Makkah for al-Kufa in Iraq to be declared a caliph, and also examines the circumstances of his murder by the Umayyad army in A.D. 680, will notice that al-Ḥusain's character resembles the characters of some earlier prophets and messengers in a number of aspects and qualities. The Shî'ite biographers of al-Ḥusain sought connections and similarities between him and his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad, and other prophets and messengers, mainly the Prophet 'Îsâ (Jesus Christ) and the Prophet Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ (John the Baptist). This effort is not unusual in the Shî'ite sources, as is evident from the biographies of the twelve Shî'ite imâms. These are observed to enjoy extraordinary qualities[1] and are distinguished from ordinary people by their superhuman abilities. They are described as superior to other people, and higher in position and status; they are protected by God against falling into great sin. The Shî'ite imâms can perform miracles; they know the unknown, and God has told them the secrets of the world from its beginning until the Hour of Doomsday (*Qiyâm al-Sâ'ah*). They also know about the books that God has revealed in various languages.

The Shî'ite writers are at pains to find religious authorities to confirm the similarity of qualities between the twelve imâms and the prophets and messengers of God. They adduce these qualities from the narratives and stories of the prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyâ'*)[2] where they find a rich choice of traits of the prophets, which they then ascribe to their imâms. A special type of literature evolved intended to elevate the significance and status of imâms. It is called *dalâ'il al-imâmah*.[3] This activity parallels that of orthodox Sunnî writers, who describe in their works the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Sunnî

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works are known as *dalâ'il al-nubuwwah.*[4] Because of this tendency, the biographies of the twelve Shī'ite imâms, from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭâlib (d. A.D. 661) and to the twelfth imâm Muḥammad al-Muntaẓar, who disappeared in Samarra in A.D. 878, show that each of them possessed extraordinary prophetic qualities. The biography of the third imâm, al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī, who was murdered in Karbala in A.D. 680, is no exception here. He also resembles previous Prophets in his physical, spiritual, and mental qualities; his life is likened to that of his grandfather, the Prophet Muḥammad, and his dying is portrayed as akin to the dying of the Prophet 'Îsâ[5] and of the Prophet Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ.

The historical resemblance between Yaḥyâ and al-Ḥusain shows that each of them carries a heavenly message. Both were afflicted by a severe trial and a heavy calamity. They both suffered but showed endurance. Moreover, their ends were similar. Without their martyrdom neither religion, Christianity nor Islam, would have prevailed and survived to the present day.

The Shī'ite writers seek these similarities primarily in the circumstances of their murders. One may ask how these writers can find such similarities in the two historical figures of al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī and Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ, so remote from each other in geography and chronology. The answer is that the Shī'ite tried to find such connections because they deemed the imâms to be ideal and superhuman characters. Yaḥyâ is a prophet and al-Ḥusain is the son of the ordained 'imâm of the Prophet Muḥammad. For Shī'ites, the imâm, to some extent, has the qualities of prophets. Accordingly, al-Ḥusain possesses the qualities of Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ.

Why did the Shī'ite authors specifically choose Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ for comparison to al-Ḥusain?

Several common qualities exist between al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ, evident from the beginning of their lives. These are the periods of their mothers' pregnancies, their namings, their way of suckling, their significant roles for both religions, their martyrdom, the cruel manner of their deaths, the

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similar treatment of their murderers and similar events that followed their martyrdoms. All this is so powerful that it drew the attention of the Shî'ite authors and made them believe that these are not mere coincidences, but planned by God Himself and that there is a message in the similarities.

Both suffered and were killed because God wished to reveal to the peoples of the earth the issues of right and wrong. Both of them were reformers and promoters of their religions. They lived in corrupt societies, but they strengthened belief in their faiths through their martyrdoms. Finally, the Shî'ite authors may have wanted to imply that al-Ḥusain's position in Islam is similar to that of Yaḥyâ in spreading Christianity. Both have equal significance and status: Yaḥyâ second only to Jesus and al-Ḥusain second only to the Prophet Muḥammad.

In various sources, such as *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyâ'* and the Gospel, I found several points of contact between the two figures, al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ. The Shî'ite writers, especially the writers of *maqâtil* who were influenced by the biography of Yaḥyâ, selected specific details and remoulded them in the Islamic Shî'ite character, aimed at imparting to al-Ḥusain the qualities of a saint belonging to a distinguished holy family.[6]

The Shî'ite authors started likening al-Ḥusain to Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ at the end of the eighth century with the appearance of the book *Maqtal al-Ḥusain* by Abû Mikhnaf Lût ibn Yaḥyâ (d. A.D. 774). Writing on this subject has continued steadily since then.

In this article I attempt to find the qualities which al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ have in common, especially those so far ignored by researchers. These relate to the manner of their murder and their heads being served and delivered on a salver. These similar and common qualities are summarised in the following.

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Annunciation of Birth

It is mentioned in the holy Qur'ân that God announced the birth of Yahyâ in addressing his father Zakariyyâ: "O Zakariyyâ! Lo! We bring thee tidings of a son whose name is John".[7] This is also mentioned in the New Testament when the angel appeared to Zachariah, John's father, and said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zachariah; your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, whom you shall call by the name John".[8] Similarly, the angel Gabriel brought the news of al-Ḥusain's birth to his grandfather, the Prophet, when he said to him: "O Muḥammad! God is bringing you the news that you will have a son by Fâtimah".[9]

Period of Pregnancy

The period of gestation of both Yaḥyâ and al-Ḥusain was six months and not nine months as commonly thought. Yaḥyâ's mother Elizabeth bore him after six months of pregnancy, during the reign of King Sabur in A.D. 303. The following quotation is from the Gospel:

> And Elizabeth, your cousin, is herself also expecting a son in her age and it is now the sixth month with her, though she is called barren; for no promise from God shall fail to be fulfilled.[10]

The Shî'ite sources mention that al-Ḥusain as well was born after six months of his mother's pregnancy; "and no other one was born after six months except for Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ and al-Ḥusain, peace be upon him".[11]

Naming of the Baby

According to both the Shî'ite sources and the Gospel, the names given to both al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ were inspired and revealed by God. Both names were new at that time, no one having been given these names before. According to the Qur'ân, "(It was said unto him): O Zakariyyâ! Lo We bring

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thee tidings of a son whose name is John, we have given the name to none before (him)".[12]

According to Gospel:

> A week later, they met to circumcise the child, and were about to call him Zakariyyâ after his father, when his mother interposed: "No, he is to be called John". "You have no relation to that name!" they exclaimed; and they made signs to the child's father to find out what he wished the child be called. Asking for a writing-tablet, he wrote the words: His name is John. Everyone was surprised.[13]

Concerning al-Ḥusain, there is a story that when Fâṭimah gave birth to al-Ḥusain, God revealed to the angel Gabriel that a baby was born to the Prophet Muḥammad. He said, "Go down to him and congratulate him and tell him that 'Alî's position to him was similar to Hârûn's position to Moses. Call him by the name of Hârûn's son." Gabriel descended and conveyed God's congratulations and said: "'Alî's position to you is like Hârûn's position to Moses. Call him by the name of Hârûn's son". The Prophet Muḥammad asked: "What name?" and Gabriel answered: "Shabbîr." The Prophet Muḥammad said: "But my tongue is Arabic!" and he called him al-Ḥusain. Accordingly, al-Ḥusain's name is like the name of Hârûn's son, and that God revealed the name to Muḥammad through the angel Gabriel.

No Nursing at Their Mothers' Breast

The Shî'ite sources mention that after his birth, Yaḥyâ was raised to Heaven and was fed from the rivers of Paradise until he was weaned. He was then brought down again to his father and the house was lit by his light.[14] Concerning al-Ḥusain, there is a story that is referred to by Abû 'Abd-Allâh Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq (d. A.D. 765): "Al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alî, peace be upon him, did not suckle from his mother's (Fâṭimah's) breasts nor from any other female. He was brought to the Prophet (God's blessing and peace be upon him), who would put his thumb in

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his mouth; from it, Ḥusain sucked enough for two or three days. Thus, al-Ḥusain's flesh grew out of the flesh and blood of his grandfather the Prophet Muḥammad."[15]

Both Were Murdered by Illegitimate Persons Whose Fate Was Hell

Yaḥyâ's murderer was Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Central Transjordan.[16] Herod was described as "an illegitimate son" (a bastard) and Yaḥyâ's head was given as a gift to one of the prostitutes of the people of Israel (Banû Isrâ'îl). Similarly, al-Ḥusain's murderer 'Ubaid-Allâh ibn Ziyâd (d. A.D. 686) was the son of a prostitute called Murjânah. His grandmother Sumayyah, who was also a prostitute, was the mother of Ziyâd ibn Abîh. The purpose of the Shî'ite authors was to highlight the notion that prophets and imâms and their sons were murdered only by sons of prostitutes.[17] Sumayyah was a prostitute whose procurer was al-Ḥârith ibn Kildah al-Thaqafî (d. A.D. 670) in Ṭa'if. She bore a son called "Ziyâd", whose real father's identity is dubious. It is not known whether he was Abû 'Ubaid al-Ḥârith ibn Kildah al-Thaqafî or Abû Sufyân Ṣakhr ibn Ḥarb (d. A.D. 652). Because of this uncertainty Ziyâd was considered a *da'iyy* (one whose origin or lineage, or parentage is suspect). The point is that 'Ubaid-Allâh ibn Ziyâd, the ruler of al-Kufa, was bastard, an illegitimate son; he was a *da'iyy* who murdered the Prophet's grandson. Through this fact the Shî'ites try to generalise that the murderers of prophets, imâms, and their descendants are of illegitimate parentage and bastards.

The Weeping of Earth and Heaven with Sorrow for Their Death

Earth and Heaven wept for the murder of both Yaḥyâ and al-Ḥusain. According to the Shî'ite writers, after their deaths it rained for forty days and the horizon glowed red at sunrise and sunset. Earth and heaven wept only for Yaḥyâ and al-Ḥusain, and for no one else.[18] Al-Tha'labî presents a story which says that when Zakariyyâ heard about the murder of his son, Yaḥyâ, God made him sink into the ground.[19] Similarly, on the murder of al-Ḥusain, earth shuddered, the mountains nearly split, the heavens rained blood, the sun was eclipsed,

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the stars appeared in heaven during the day, the moon was eclipsed that night, and the horizon was reddened with the blood of al-Ḥusain. These two miracles indicate the greatness of the two martyrs and the enormity of God's anger, who made the sky and earth cry and tremble. He desired that the elements of nature take part in mourning. The death of al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ altered the course of nature owing to God's anger at his creatures who persecuted both great martyrs, Yaḥyâ and al-Ḥusain.

Murder of a Large Number of Companions

When Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ was murdered, a large number of religious scholars who had denounced Herod's tyranny and persecution were also murdered, among them Yahyâ's father.[20] Similarly, when al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alî was murdered, a number of his followers and relatives were murdered. Their number amounted to 62 or 72 people.[21]

The Head on a Salver

When Yaḥyâ was murdered, his head was brought on a golden salver to Herod,[22] who was then drinking and being entertained by girls who were dancing and singing in front of him. One of these dancers, called Salome, took the salver and continued dancing with it, with Yaḥyâ's head on it, before Herod and by his consent.

Al-Husain's head was sent by the ruler of al-Kufa, 'Ubaid-Allah ibn Ziyâd (d. A.D. 686) to the Umayyad Caliph Yazîd ibn Mu'âwiyah (A.D. 683-680) in Damascus, together with the heads of al-Ḥusain's companions who fought with him in the Battle of Karbala. When the bearer of the heads come to the Caliph Yazîd, al-Ḥusain's head was set on a golden salver before him, while he was drinking.[23] Then Yazîd started playing with al-Husain's teeth with a rod in his hand.

Hence, the two rulers, Herod and Yazîd, are similar in that both were oppressive. The former murdered a Prophet while the later murdered an imâm. Each amused himself with

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the head of the man he had murdered and abused it after it was served, and continued drinking beside the severed head. Through this story and its description the Shī'ite writers sought to accentuate the enormous depravity of these two rulers, who lacked any kind of human and moral standards.

The Severed Head Speaks

Yaḥyâ was beheaded because of his opinion as a legal advisor that it was unlawful for an uncle to engage in sexual relations with his niece.[24] After the decapitation his head was heard to say to Herod: "O you! Fear God! This is forbidden to you!"[25]

More details are available concerning the beheading of al-Ḥusain. It is said that on many occasions after it was severed his head uttered words, especially at night. When the head spoke, people around it heard loud sounds that resembled the roar of thunder.[26] Al-Ḥusain's head first spoke at the entrance to al-Kufa, by the gate of the Banû Khuzaimah tribe. The second time it spoke was at the house of Khaulī al-Aṣbaḥī, who had taken the head and kept it there. Khaulī's wife heard al-Ḥusain's head reciting Qur'ânic verses. The third time al-Ḥusain's head was heard to speak was at a house of a Jew, the rabbi of Qinnisrin,[27] when the head was impaled on the point of a spear on its way to Damascus. When the convoy of captives together with the head stopped to rest near his house, the rabbi asked them to place the head by his house and they did so. When he realised that this was the head of al-Ḥusain, he asked it to intercede for him with the Prophet Muḥammad. The head then spoke in eloquent classical Arabic and promised to intercede for the Jew with his grandfather, the Prophet. At that instant the Jew declared his conversion to Islam, together with his family, through the mediation of al-Ḥusain's head.[28]

At night al-Ḥusain's head recited Qur'ânic verse. A verse that was heard was from *Sûrah* "al-Kahf" (Cave): "Or deemest thou that the people of the cave and the inscription are a wonder among our portents?"[29]

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Removal of the Head from the Grave

It is said that after the murder of Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ and the burial of his head, the head was removed from its grave after a short period of time. When the head was unearthed, its skin and hair were reportedly unchanged, just as if Yaḥyâ had been killed at that moment.[30] Similarly, al-Ḥusain's head was also removed from its burial place.[31] When it was removed, there was still blood on it and it was still soft as if he had been murdered exactly then. Al-Maqrîzî, who supports the view that the burial place of al-Ḥusain is 'Asqalân and was taken to Cairo, its blood was found to be not yet dry and it had a smell like that of musk.[32]

Revenge

God took revenge for al-Ḥusain's murder by causing the murder of 140,000 men.[33] After al-Ḥusain's murder, two movements arose that demanded revenge for his death. The first was the movement of al-Tawwâbûn,[34] headed by Sulaimân ibn Surad al-Khuzâ'î (d. A.D. 684), the second the movement of al-Mukhtâr ibn 'Ubaid al-Thaqafî (d. A.D. 687). The members of these two movements pursued al-Ḥusain's murderers and killed a large number of them.

With regard to Yaḥyâ's murder, according to the sources, God avenged his death by destroying the first Temple through Bukhtanasser, killing 70,000 men. According to tradition, Yaḥyâ's blood filled a pot. When it was poured onto the ground, the blood boiled and it rose up and then sank down again. Although earth was tossed onto it, it swelled and rose above the earth till it became a high hill. After the lapse of a year, Bukhtanasser occupied Jerusalem/Bait al-Maqdis and when he saw the blood he was surprised. He asked about it but no one answered him till an old man came and told him about the story of Herod. Bukhtanasser swore to continue killing until the blood stopped boiling.[35] He actually did kill 70,000 people before Yaḥyâ's blood abated and stopped boiling,[36] revenge having been taken for his death.

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The Connection of Their Names to Paradise

There are many tradition in the Shī'ite sources that connect al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ with Heaven and show that their fate was to be in Paradise.[37] An example is this one from Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq: al-Ḥusain is the master of martyrs and master of young men in paradise. The Prophet to whom he is similar is Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ. From this tradition and its like we observe that the fate of al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ is Paradise. Both were unjustly killed; they were murdered as martyrs in the prime of their life for their adherence to righteousness and true faith.

Continuous Weeping

Al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ are described as tearful persons, both of whom habitually secluded themselves and wept privately.[38] Weeping is one of the characteristics of Prophets, guardians and Imâms. Several traditions mention the Prophet Muḥammad's weeping, caused by his concern for the fate of the Islamic nation, thankfulness to God, eagerness for His mercy, and a lover's longing for the beloved.[39] Al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī also used to weep copiously. Before leaving al-Ḥijâz en route for Iraq he went to the grave of his grandfather the Prophet; there he wept because he knew the fate that awaited him.[40] He also wept at the murder of his eldest son, 'Alī al-Akbar, at Karbala,[41] and when he came to know that the Umayyad army had resolved to kill him because of their hatred of his father, 'Alī.[42] He wept again when al-Qâsim, his nephew, i.e. al-Ḥasan's son, asked his permission to fight the Umayyads at the battle of Karbala; al-Ḥusain granted it, and wept.[43]

The Shining Face

Both al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ are described as having "shining faces." The face of each one illuminated his house. When al-Ḥusain sat, a beam of light was seen shining from his face.[44] The idea the Shī'ites wanted to express was apparently that the light shining from the faces of both al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ was a

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Godly radiance that had passed by inheritance down the prophets and their heirs, including Yaḥyâ, until it reached 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather. Then it split into two halves; the first half reached 'Abd-Allâh, the Prophet's father, and the second reached Abû Ṭâlib, and then passed on to 'Alî bin Abû Ṭâlib. From 'Alî, the light passed on to his two sons Ḥasan and Ḥusain. From al-Ḥusain it moved to the rest of his descendent imâms.[45]

Al-Furât and Jordan Rivers

Al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alî has a certain connection to the river al-Furât. He was killed beside it and was prevented from drinking from it. His horse killed itself by leaping into this river after the murder of al-Ḥusain. Tradition says that the horse will return at the end of time ridden by al-Ḥusain.[46] Moreover, for the Shî'ites al-Furât river is one of the rivers of heaven on earth. Its taste is of the taste of heaven. The visitor of al-Ḥusain's grave must make his ablutions in its water, which will wipe away his sins and his errors.[47] It is related that Abû 'Abd-Allâh Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq (d. A.D. 765) said that he who washes in the water of al-Furât and visits al-Ḥusain's grave becomes as on the day of his birth, without any sins, even if he committed the greatest of sins.[48]

Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ, on the other hand, is connected to the river Jordan because he baptised babies in its waters. This is a blessing, for through washing in its water repentance for sins committed is shown.[49] Yaḥyâ appeared on the banks of the Jordan in order to warn people that they should repent. The people of Jerusalem and the nearby villages went out to him and he baptised them in the river. He foretold them of the approach of the Kingdom of God. He baptised Jesus Christ in the river Jordan and blessed him when he was thirty years old.[50]

In, sum, both al-Ḥusain and Yaḥyâ have some connection to a holy river, respectively al-Furât and the Jordan. The water of both of them washes sins away because it is holy water.

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Summary

In the foregoing several features common to Ḥusain ibn 'Alî and Yaḥyâ ibn Zakariyyâ have been set forth. The birth of both was annunciated to their parents, their mothers' pregnancy was six months, the names by which they were called by were God-inspired, they did not suckle from their mothers' breasts. Their murderers were sons of prostitutes, and heaven and earth wept as a sign of mourning at their killing. A large number of their adherents were killed. The severed heads of the two men were delivered on a salver, the heads spoke, and the heads were removed from their graves. God avenged their deaths, and their names are lined to Paradise. Similarly, their qualities were alike: both wept abundantly, their faces were radiant, and each of them was killed beside a holy river.

This similarity between these two persons, which is stressed in the writings of the Shî'ites especially, is intended to elevate the status of Imâm Ḥusain to that of holy men of God, in particular to that of the Prophet Yaḥyâ.

ENDNOTES

(1) Muḥammad ibn Ya'qûb al-Kulainî, *al-Uṣûl min al-Kâfî* (Tehran: Dâr al-Kutub al-Islâmiyyah, 1965), p. 177. See also Muhammad Ali Amir Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shî'ism: The Esotericism in Islam*, translated by David Streight (State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 99-115.

(2) John C.L. Gibson, "John the Baptist in Muslim Writings", *The Muslim World*, vol. xlv, 1955, p. 335.

(3) See for example Abû Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarîr ibn Rustum al-Ṭabarî al-Ṣaghîr, *Dalâ'il al- Imâmah* (ed.), Department of Islamic Studies (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-Bi'thah, 1st edn., 1413/1988).

(4) See, for example, Abû Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusain al-Baihaqî, *Dalâ'il al-Nubuwwah wa Ma'rifat Aṣḥâb al-Sharî'ah*, ed. Dr. 'Abd al-Mu'ṭî Qal'ajî (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al- Islâmiyyah, 1st edn., 1980).

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(5) For common qualities among al-Ḥusain, the Prophet Muḥammad, and Jesus, see Khalid Sindawi, "The *Maqâtil* in the Shi'ite Literature" (Hebrew), unpublished doctoral thesis, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2000, pp. 145-147.

(6) This family and its descendants are called *Ahl al-Bait*. It includes the Prophet Muḥammad, Fâṭimah and her husband 'Alî, their two sons al-Ḥusain and al-Ḥasan. Later the descendants of al-Ḥusain and al-Ḥasan became known as 'Ṭâlibiyyûn'. For more details on *Ahl al-Bait*, see M. Sharon, "*Ahl al-Bait*: People of the House", *JSAI*, vol. 8, 1986, pp. 169-184; M. Sharon, "The Umayyads as *Ahl al-Bait*", *JSAI*, vol. 14, 1991, pp. 116-165.

(7) Qur'ân XIX:7. English translation by Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'ân* (Entesharat Salehi, Tehran, n.d.), p. 289.

(8) Luke, 1:13. English translation by Fleming H. Revell Company (London and Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 103-104.

(9) Muḥammad Bâqir al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafâ', 2nd edn., 1983), 44:231. See also Najm al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Ja'far Abû al-Baqâ' Hibat al-Dîn al-Ḥillî, surnamed Ibn Nâmah, *Muthîr al-Aḥzân wa Munîr Subul al-Ashjân* (Tehran, 1317/1899), p. 5. Luke 1:26-27. English translation by Fleming H. Revell Company, p. 105.

(10) Luke 1:26-27.

(11) Jaakko Hammeen-Attila, "John the Baptist and Early Islamic Polemics Concerning Jesus", *Acta Orientalia*, vol. 60, 1999, pp. 80-86. See also Ni'mat-Allâh al-Jazâ'irî, *al-Nûr al-Mubîn fî Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyâ' wa 'l-Mursalîn* (Beirut: Dâr al-Andalus, 1980), p. 401.

(12) Qur'ân XIX:7. English translation by Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'ân*, p. 298.

(13) Luke 1:59-63. English translation by Fleming H. Revell Company, p. 106.

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(14) Al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr*, 14:180, 198. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrâhîm al-Nîsâbûrî, surnamed al-Tha'labî, *Qiṣaṣ al- Anbiyâ' al-Musammâ 'Arâ'is al-Majâlis* (Dâr Iḥyâ' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), p. 338.

(15) Al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr, loc. cit.*

(16) *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn. (Chicago, 1993), vol. 6, p. 587.

(17) Al-Jazâ'irî, *al-Nûr al-Mubîn*, pp. 400-401.

(18) Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Qulawaihî, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, ed. 'Abd al-Husain al- Amînî al-Tabrîzî (Najaf, 1937), p. 89. See also 'Imâd al-Dîn Ismâ'îl ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Aẓîm* (Cairo: Dâr Iḥyâ' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), 4:142-143.

(19) Al-Tha'labî, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyâ'*, p. 341; Sindawi, The *Maqâtil*, p. 209; Ibn Nâmah, *Muthîr al-Aḥzân*, pp. 205-206.

(20) Muḥammad 'Alî al-Sâbûnî, *al-Nubuwwah wa 'l-Anbiyâ'* (Damascus: Dâr al-Qalam, 4th edn., 1989), p. 396.

(21) Those murdered with al-Husain in the battle of Karbala are given different names in *maqâtil* literature, such as Aṣḥâb al-Ḥusain, Anṣâr al-Ḥusain, or Jamâ'at al-Ḥusain. Several biographies of Aṣḥâb al-Ḥusain are found in this period; for example, 'Alî Muḥammad Dikhayyil, *Aṣḥâb al-Husain* (Beirut: Dâr al-Ṭayyâr al-Jadîd, 2nd ed., 1985). See also Muḥammad Mahdî Shams al-Dîn, *Anṣâr al-Ḥusain* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-Dawaliyyah li'l-Dirâsât wa 'l-Nashr, 3rd edn., 1996).

(22) John C.L. Gibson, "John the Baptist in Muslim Writings", *The Muslim World*, vol. xlv, 1955, p. 344.

(23) Despite the prohibition of alcohol in Islam, the Umayyad caliphs allegedly drank alcoholic drinks. It is alleged that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz, 717-720, drank but later he repented. The Caliph Mu'âwiya ibn Abî Sufyân was the only Umayyad Caliph who

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abstained from drinking alcoholic drinks all his life out of *murû'ah*. For details, see Abû 'Uthmân Baḥr al-Jâḥiẓ, *Kitâb al-Tâj fî Akhlâq al-Mulûk*, ed. Zakî Aḥmad (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Amîriyyah, 1954), pp. 32-38.

(24) Al-Tha'labî gives several traditions with regard to the girl whom Herod married and who seduced him to murder John/Yaḥyâ. Some say she was the daughter of the king of Tyre, others that she was Herodia, the wife of Herod's brother. She is said to be Herod's mistress. Yaḥyâ advised him to leave her and she was forbidden as his mistress. The woman asked Herod to bring her Yaḥyâ's head, and so he did. For details, see al-Tha'labî, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyâ'*, pp. 340-341.

(25) *Ibid.*, p. 314.

(26) Akhtab Khawârizm, *Maqtal al-Ḥusain* (Najaf: Maṭba'at al-Zahrâ', 1948), p. 107.

(27) Qinnisrin is a city in Syria. For details, see Yâqût al-Ḥamawî, *Mu'jam al-Buldân* (Beirut: Dâr Iḥyâ' al-Turâth al-'Arabî, 1979), 4:403-404 (entry: Qinnisrin).

(28) Sindawi, The *Maqâtil*, p. 220.

(29) Qur'ân, XVII:9. English translation by Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'ân. . .*, p. 276.

(30) Taqiyy al-Dîn Aḥmad ibn 'Alî al-Maqrîzî, *Kitâb al-Mawâ'iẓ wa 'l-I'tibâr bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa 'l-Âthâr al-Ma'rûf bi al-Khiṭaṭ al-Maqrîziyyah*, 1st edn. (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), 2:323.

(31) Eight versions exist about the place of the burial of al-Ḥusain's head. One of these is Karbala, whose proponents argue that the head was returned to the body and buried with it forty days after al-Ḥusain's murder, that is, on 20th Ṣafar, 61 Hijri. This date is marked as the anniversary of restoration of the head and the burial, called Marrad al-Ra's, by a visit to Karbala, called

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Ziyârat al-Arba'în). The other places are Madinah, Halab, Marw, al-Riqqa, Damascus, Asqalan, and Cairo. For more details, see Taqiyy al-Dîn Abu 'l-'Abbâs ibn Taimiyyah, *Ra's al-Ḥusain*, ed. Muḥammad Jamîl Ghâzî (Jeddah: Dâr al-Madanî, 1985), pp. 183, 187-189.

(32) Al-Maqrîzî, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Maqrîziyyah*, 2:323; 'Imâd al-Dîn Ismâ'îl ibn Kathîr, *al-Bidâyah wa 'l-Nihâyah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ma'ârif, 1929), 8:221; Muḥammad Bayûnî Mahrân, *al-Imâm al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alî* (Beirut: Dâr al-Nahaḍ al-'Arabiyyah li 'l-Ṭibâ'ah wa 'l-Nashr, 1990), pp. 156-179; Sindawi, The *Maqâtil*, p. 224.

(33) Al-Qâḍî al-Nu'mân ibn Muḥammad al-Tamîmî, *Shahr al-Akhbâr fî Faḍâ'il al-A'immah al-Akhyâr*, 1st edn. (Beirut: Dâr al-Thaqalain, 1994), 3:168.

(34) On the Tawwâbûn movement, see G.R. Hawting, "The Tawwâbûn Atonement and 'Âshûrâ'," *JSAI*, vol. 17, 1994, pp. 166-181.

(35) In another version, God took revenge on Banî Isrâ'îl (the people of Israel) for Yaḥyâ's and Zachariyya's blood. He killed the great men of Banû Isrâ'îl and put 170,000 of them into captivity. For more details, see al-Tha'labî, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyâ'*, p. 342.

(36) 'Abd-Allâh Duhinî, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyâ'* (Beirut: Dâr al-Ṣafwah, 1994), 2:218.

(37) Ibn Kathîr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyâ'*, p. 479.

(38) Al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr*, 14:211, 215, 216.

(39) Abû al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn al-Jawzî, *al-Wafâ' bi-Aḥwâl al-Muṣṭafâ*, Muṣṭafâ 'Abd al-Wâḥid (ed.) 1st ed. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'âda bi-Miṣr, 1966), pp. 534-542.

(40) Abû Mikhnaf Lûṭ ibn Yaḥyâ, *Maqtal al-Ḥusain*, 'Umar Abû al-Naṣr (ed.) (Beirut, 1971), p. 15.

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(41) Ibn Nâmah, *Muthîr al-Aḥzân*, p. 15.

(42) Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Ḥusain*, p. 71.

(43) *Ibid.*, p. 16.

(44) Al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr*, 14:187-188; Ibn Nâmah, *al-Aḥzân*, pp. 39, 45; Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahuf*, pp. 69, 76.

(45) Several traditions by the Shî'ite describe in detail the transfer of this light from Adam to the 12th Imâm. For more details, see: Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alî ibn al-Ḥusain al-Mas'ûdî, *Ithbât al-Waṣiyyah li 'l-Imâm 'Alî Ibn Abî Ṭâlib* (n.p., n.d.), 1:17, 52, 69, 74, 137. This light is described as originating in God's light, the light of wisdom, or the Light. It illumines the soul of those carrying it of prophets and *imâms*. It symbolises the divine spirit that grants its carrier supernatural qualities. U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and light aspects of the concept of Nûr Muḥammad", *ISO*, vol. 5, 1975, pp. 62-119; Amir Moezzi, *The Divine Guide*, pp. 29-43; Al-Kulainî, *al-Uṣûl min al-Kâfi*, 1:244-257; Muḥammad ibn 'Îsâ al-Tirmidhî, *Auṣâf al-Nabî*, Samih 'Abbâs (ed.) 1st ed. (Beirut: Dâr al-Jîl, n.d.), pp. 28, 31, 100, 269.

(46) Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 15.

(47) Al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr*, 97:107. See also al-Ḥamawî, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, 4:242 (entry f.r.t.).

(48) Al-Jazâ'irî, *al-Nûr al-Mubîn*, p. 398-399. See also Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (Mouton: The Hague, 1978), p. 36.

(49) Gibson, *John the Baptist*, p. 335.

(50) Muḥammad 'Alî al-Ṣâbûnî, *al-Nubuwwah wa 'l-Anbiyâ'*, 2nd edn. (Damascus: Dâr al-Qalam, 1989), p. 395.

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Āshūrā' Day and Yom Kippur

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Abstract

Āshūrā', characterized by fasting and mourning, commemorates Ḥysayn ibn ʿAlī's murder. This paper discusses ʿĀshūrā"s origin, historical background, symbols and rituals, and shows similarities between ʿĀshūrā' and the Jewish Yom Kippur. Scholars disagree about the origin of the word "'Āshūrā'." Some believe it derives from Hebrew; others claim that the word is of Arabic origin. Most agree that Āshūrā' was designated an annual fast to atone for sins, purify the faithful, and thank God.
We discuss the miracles that occurred on Āshūrā', and blessings bestowed upon those who observe it, as well as differences and similarities, including dates, observances like affliction, confession, forgiveness, and connection to Judgement Day. The significance of Yom Kippur is its atonement for sins and asking forgiveness, like Āshūrā', which preserves Ḥusayn's memory. Repentance, fasting, affliction, and purification through ritual bestow rewards. These evoke, despite great differences, characteristics of the Jewish Yom Kippur.

Introduction

Āshūrā' Day, the tenth day of the month of *al-Muḥarram*, is the remembrance day for the murder of Ḥusayn ibn Aʿlī at Karbalā' in the year 680. The day and its accompanying ceremonies are characterized by lamentation, fasting and mourning.

In the Battle of Karbalā' Ḥusayn, the second son of the *'Imām* Aʿlī and grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad, attempted to fulfill his right to rule, but was cruelly murdered along with many members of his family. Ḥusayn

was defeated by the Umayyad ruler Yazīd Ibn Muʿāwiya's army. This mass murder left a deep impression in the consciousness of the Shīʿites, and made Ḥusayn martyr, the victim of injustice. Karbalāʾ became a religious and national symbol, and every year the Shīʿites mark ʿĀshūrāʾ Day with mourning and eulogies. On this day the Shīʿites fast, afflict themselves, eulogize Ḥusayn and recall his memory.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the origin of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day, to describe its characteristic symbols and the rituals conducted on the day; and to try to discover points of comparison and similarity between the Shīʿite Moslem holiday and the Jewish fast of Yom Kippur, the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar.

The Origin of the Word "ʿĀshūrāʾ"

Scholars disagree about the origin of the word "ʿĀshūrāʾ." Some are of the opinion that its origin is Hebrew, deriving from the word *eser* (i.e. the tenth day of the month of *Muḥarram.* Others claim that the word is of ancient Arabic origin, as early as the period of the Jāhiliyya, or dating from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. Some scholars assert that the reason for the name ʿĀshūrāʾ is that God performed ten miracles for ten prophets; another opinion maintains that this day marks the tenth of the ten miracles that God performed for the Arab nation.

Al-Bustānī, for example, believes that *al-ʿĀshūrāʾ*, or *al-ʿĀshūrī*, is the Arabic version of *Yod b'Tishre* (tenth of *Tishre*). Al-Bayrūnī also believes that the word *ʿĀshūrāʾ* is of Arabized Hebrew origin, and its meaning is "ten." *Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad* (d. 786? AD) writes that the Arabs took the word from the Biblical verse *b'chodesh hashevi'i b'asor lachodesh* (in the seventh month on the tenth day of the month) and constructed the name according to the structure of *Fāʿūlāʾ*, lengthening the Hebrew word *asor* to *ʿĀshūrāʾ*.[1]

The origin of the holy day is also controversial. Was this day one of the holy days of the *Jāhiliyya*, or did it originate from a Jewish holiday? We will discuss the latter opinion later. Those that hold the opinion that this holiday is so named because it marks the tenth of the miracles, understand that its origin is related to the belief that God granted the Moslem nation ten miracles:

God forgave Adam for his sin,
Noah's ark came to rest on Mt. Al-Jūdī (Arrart),
Abraham was born on the same day,

[1] al-Bayrūnī, n.d, p. 330; al-Miṣrī, 1980, 4/569 s.v. (A.sh.r).

God rescued Joseph from the pit,
God crossed the sea before Moses in the exodus from Egypt,
God forgave David for his sin,
God rescued the prophet Yūnis (Jonah) from the belly of the whale,
Jesus was born and ascended to heaven on the same date,
God exalted the Prophet Muḥammad and favored him over all other prophets,
God chose the Moslem nation and favored it over all other nations of the world.

Other scholars cite different miracles when enumerating the ten miracles, but most agree that ʿĀshūrā' Day was designated an annual fast day in order to atone for sins and purify the faithful, and to thank God for the miracles and wonders that He performed for the Arab Nation.[2]

Historical Background

The tenth day of *Muḥarram* (ʿĀshūrā'), in the 61st year of the *hijra* (10/10/680), the Battle of Karbalā' broke out between Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī Ibn 'Abū Ṭālib the *'imām* of the Shīʿites, and the armies of ʿUbayd allah b. Ziyād (d. 686), the vizier of the Umayyad dynasty at Kufa. Ḥusayn and many members of his family and supporters were slaughtered, and Ḥusayn's head was sent to the Caliph Yazīd together with his captive wives and sisters.

The background to the battle was the struggle over the succession and for authority to stand at the head of Islam. In the year 632 the Prophet Muḥammad died, and his authority passed to his close friends, 'Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī. Their rule is known as the Period of the Four *Caliphs* (632-661). During this time the foundations of Moslem rule for the following centuries were established, but the problems that brought about schisms in Islam were created. Questions about ordination and authority were left open, and it was unclear which persons were to constitute the elite in the new Islamic nation.[3]

When ʿAlī b. 'Abū Ṭālib (d. 661), cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, was chosen as the fourth caliph, civil war broke out between the supporters of the Umayyad dynasty, the successors of the murdered Caliph ʿUthmān, and the supporters of ʿAlī. The governor of Syria, Muʿāwiya b. 'Abū Sufyān (d. 680), led the Umayyad army. In 657 the Battle of Ṣiffīn broke out between the armies of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, after which ʿAlī' agreed to an arbi-

[2] Sindawi, 2000, p. 1-2.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

tration with Muʿāwiya that would determine which of the two was entitled to rule the Caliphate. The arbitration agreement dangerously weakened ʿAlīʾs position, and led to his murder four years later.

Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, his second son, decided to recover for himself and his followers his father's title to the caliphate. After the Umayyad caliph's death, his son Yazīd (d. 683) ascended to power. Convinced that the opportune moment had arrived, Ḥusayn and his followers refused to swear loyalty to the caliph Yazīd.

In 680 Ḥusayn left Hijāz for Kūfa in southern Iraq to lead the anti-Umayyad revolt. As the Shīʿite *ʾimām* and successor of the Prophet Muḥammad, he believed he was pursuing his claim from a position of strength.. But Kufa's inhabitants, yielding to Yazīd's pressure, withdrew their support, breaking their pledge. This is the background to the sense of guilt that accompanied the followers for deserting Ḥusayn, and one of the main reasons for the deep mourning and self-reproach accompanying the day of remembrance.

The legions sent by the Umayyad vizier of Kūfa took Ḥusayn and his followers by surprise as they entered the borders of Iraq. The decisive battle broke out at Karbalāʾ, on the western bank of the Euphrates. Ḥusayn and his men fought bravely but could not defeat Yazīd's army. Ḥusayn, together with his supporters and family members, were killed.

The death of the grandson of the Prophet and of members of his family — who were also descendants of the Prophet — in the campaign against the Umayyads (who were, in the eyes of the Shīʿites, usurpers) was seen as murder of martyrs. It had a profound effect on many who supported and loved the family of the Prophet. This historic event provided an enormous impetus for the religious development of ʿAlīʿs faction.

"It started as a simple power struggle, but gradually it acquired theological elements. The personalities of ʿAlī and his successor Ḥusayn lost a dimension of reality as they gained religious significance. Frustrated rivalries led to the development of a highly evolved martyrology, a powerful motivating force in the evolution of the Shīʿite community. Ḥusayn was transformed into a martyr, a hero who died for the sanctification of God.[4]

The Origin of the Custom of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day

The Battle of Karbalāʾ, in which Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī died while attempting to claim his right to rule, is deeply impressed on the consciousness of the Shīʿites. Karbalāʾ embodies a religious symbol as well as an instrumentality

[4] *Ibid.*

of political struggle. Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī represents the eternal struggle of between liberation and subjugation, between the forces of evil and the forces of good. Every generation has its Ḥusayn fighting on God's side, and an evil Yazīd fighting on Satan's side. This historical event remains so alive in the Shīʿite collective consciousness that "every place is Karbalā' and every day is ʿĀshūrā' Day."

The Battle of Karbalā' and Ḥusayn's murder there is the most outstanding of all the events that left their imprint on the history of Islam. Although the Moslems had already split into two camps — the supporters of the second Shīʿite *'imām* ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn, and the supporters of the Umayyads and their leader Muʿāwiya — the Shīʿite community had not yet consolidated. The historical memory of Ḥusayn's murder and the ʿĀshūrā' Day rituals created a powerful religious symbol upon which the identity and religious passion of the Shīʿite community focused, which differentiated them from the *Sunnis*.[5]

The Shīʿite collective memory captured and preserved the drama of the Battle of Karbalā', and bestowed upon it immense symbolic significance. The revival of the memory of Ḥusayn revives his connection with the twelve *'imāms*, the focus of Shīʿite faith.

Ḥusayn's suffering and anguish laid open a model embodying an exemplary way of life of self-sacrifice for a holy cause. Ḥusayn became a "prince of martyrs" (*sayyid shuhadā'*) and his suffering is perceived as the essence of historical injustice committed against the family of the Prophet. It metamorphosed the Shīʿites into a separate community whose banner is affliction. Ḥusayn's martyrdom was transformed into the "sanctified suffering," which became one of the central tenets of Shīʿite ideology. The 'imām's suffering comprises an access to redemption, and his self-sacrifice purifies and atones for the faithful. Ḥusayn died in order to preserve Islam as a pure ideal of justice and truth.[6]

The event of Karbalā' is the origin of the custom, and of the annual memorial ceremonies in memory of Ḥusayn.

ʿĀshūrā' Day Rituals

The ʿĀshūrā' Day rituals focus on lamentation, mourning and self-flagellation (both spiritual and physical). The rituals re-enact the episodes of the Battle of Karbalā' and Ḥusayn's defeat in dirges and lamentations, panto-

[5] Nakash, 1993, p. 161; Ram, 1998, pp. 50-58; For the status of Karbalā' see: Kanazi, 1992, pp. 179-194.

[6] Ram, 1998, p. 52; See also: Nakash, 1993, pp. 161-162; Ayoub, 1978, pp. 15, 52.

mime and theatre. It is not merely a commemoration of the death of a leader. It is a ceremony of atonement for sins, individual and communal.

The rituals are performed during the first ten days of the first month of the Moslem calendar, *Muḥarram*. The principal motivation is guilt and remorse; the aim is to receive Ḥusayn's forgiveness for abandoning him to die.[7]

The first ʿĀshūrāʾ Day ritual was performed in 684, just four years after Ḥusayn's murder. It was a collective ritual of self-sacrifice: the faithful spent a day and a night at the grave of the ʾimām, lamenting and mourning, and afterwards they walked in a procession of death across the battlefield of Karbalāʾ.

But the ritual's origin is much more ancient. Its roots reach back to the mourning for Tammuz in Babylon, or in its Greek version, for Adonis. Adonis (from the word *adon*, "master") was killed during a hunt. From his blood red flowers sprang up, as happened to the blood of Ḥusayn after his murder. Every year a mourning and eulogy rite was performed for Adonis, with the the belief that he is resurrected every year. Arab writers adopted the symbol in the 10th century, and transformed it into a symbol of God who is killed by men and will be resurrected like Tammuz or Adonis.[8]

The collective mourning takes different forms in the various Moslem countries. The two most common forms are the elegy — a story of the tragic events of Karbalāʾ in poetry, story, pantomime and theatre (somewhat similar to Greek tragedy) — and procession. The first procession took place in 963, after the slackening of the Sunni regime.[9]

With the dispersion of Shīʿite communities and their increasing numbers beginning in the tenth century (in the days of the Buwayhids 935-1055, who were Shīʿite) the rituals of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day developed and multiplied, but only after the proclamation of Shīʿa as the official religion at the start of the 16th century (during the rule of ʾIsmāʿīl) did these rituals receive formal recognition. From the same period we have the first written documentation of these rituals. The rituals assumed their final form in Iran at the end of the 15th century, where they are performed to this day.[10]

Characteristics of the Ritual: The faithful fast, refrain from shaving, and subsist on water only. Sometimes they do not bathe or change clothes. Some refrain from wearing shoes. Many refrain even from drinking water because Ḥusayn was fasting when he was killed.

During the days of the ritual a procession takes place. The participants

[7] Halm, 1997, p. 41.
[8] Leach & Fried, 1984, pp. 12-13.
[9] Halm, 1997, p. 42.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

wave flags, light candles, and sing lamentations accompanied by curses directed at the wicked Yazīd. During the procession the participants beg for water, symbolizing thirst.

It is noteworthy that this symbol plays an important role in the mourning ceremonies for Ḥusayn. The motif of Ḥusayn's thirst is common, and refers to the damming of the Euphrates during the campaign. It is said that the governor of Kufa and Baṣra ʿUbayd allah b. Ziyād (d. 686) ordered his subordinates to deprive Ḥusayn, his family and his subjects of access to the water of the Euphrates near Karbalā'. Thus access to the Euphrates and all the canals leading from it were obstructed, especially the al-Ghāḍiriyya canal conducting water to the area of Karbalā', where Ḥusayn and his subjects were located. As a result of the obstruction of access to the water canals, Ḥusayn and his company suffered greatly from thirst, and during the campaign at Karbalā' Ḥusayn's thirst grew more intense. The fighters mocked Ḥusayn's requests to be allowed to drink, jeering, "Is not your father ʿAlī in charge of the spring (*al-Ḥawḍ*) in the Garden of Eden? He brings water to all those who love him. Be patient, and in a short time, when you die, your father will give you water from the spring in the Garden of Eden."[11]

The rituals and mourning, known as *Majālis Ḥusayniyya*, last ten days, the length of time that Ḥusayn spent at Karbalā' from the moment he arrived to the moment that he lost his life. During the two last days of the ceremony the participants lash themselves with whips and cut themselves with daggers and swords. They believe that the souls of Ḥusayn and his men that died during the month of *Muḥarram* ascended directly to Eden. This faith caused them to afflict themselves, even to death, for Ḥusayn.

Another belief is that Ḥusayn knew that he was to die, and took it upon himself to atone for the sins of others; had he not wanted to die, no power on earth could have overcome him. Ḥusayn, like Jesus, died for the community, and by his death he atoned for the sins of his people.[12]

Each of the ten days of the ʿĀshūrā' ceremony comes to bring another death to mind, and embodies another episode from the Battle of Karbalā'. Every day commemorates one of the main historical events.

On the first to third days of *Muḥarram* Ḥusayn arrives at Karbalā' and negotiates in vain with ʿUmar b. Saʿd, commander of the Umayyad army. The fourth day is dedicated to the memory of al-Ḥur b. Yazīd al-Riyāhī al-Tamīmī, commander of Yazīd's army, who defected to Ḥusayn's camp and died by his side. The fifth day is dedicated to remembering the slaughter of the young sons of Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab (d. 682). The sixth day — to

[11] Sindawi, 2000, p. 189-190.

[12] Halm, 1997, pp. 47-56. For details see: Sindawi, 2000, pp. 232-240.

mourning over the death of Ḥusayn's oldest son ʿAlī al-ʿAkbar, aged 18; the boy was hit by Murru b. Munqidh al-ʿAbdī; while protecting his father he died in his father's arms. Occasionally on this day the death of his youngest child is also mourned; he was hit in the neck by an arrow. On the seventh day — the death of his unfortunate son-in-law al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan is remembered; he married Ḥusayn's daughter and died on his wedding anniversary. The eighth day is dedicated to mourning for Ḥusayn's half-brother al-ʿAbbās, whose hands were cut off as he went to fetch water from the Euphrates for those under siege.

On the ninth and tenth days, the high point of the ritual, the mourning for the death of Ḥusayn himself is commemorated. On these days a procession of self-flagellation is held. The young men — including small boys — take this upon themselves: they cut themselves, lash themselves, and stab themselves with daggers. In this way they atone for the iniquities of the entire community.[13]

The Merits of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day

The virtues of this day became associated with it after Ḥusayn's murder in 680. Before that date there were no special attributes to ʿĀshūrāʾ Day; in retrospect the Shīʿites attribute to it characteristics and virtues from much earlier periods.

These are its attributes: On this day God created the sky; Noah left the ark on ʿĀshūrāʾ Day; the prophets Abraham and Moses were born; the sea parted for the Israelites on ʿĀshūrāʾ Day; Fāṭima, Ḥusayn's mother, was born; and Hasan and Ḥusayn, her two sons, were also born on ʿĀshūrāʾ Day.

Moreover, on this day God created the sky, the mountains and the stars; the hidden tablet; the angel Gabriel and the rest of the angels; Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden, and put Adam in the Garden of Eden; created Abraham, drowned Pharaoh and his hosts in the sea; raised the prophet ʿIdrīs (Enoch) to heaven; forgave the prophet Yūnis (Jonah) and rescued him from the belly of the whale; delivered Job from his troubles on ʿĀshūrāʾ Day; raised Jesus to heaven; forgave David his sin; and gave Solomon the kingdom. Both Jesus and Muḥammad were born on ʿĀshūrāʾ Day, and God sat on his royal throne on this day; ʿĀshūrāʾ Day will be Judgement Day.[14]

The designation of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day as a fast day also predates the murder of

[13] Halm, 1997, pp. 62-63.
[14] Khawārizim, 1948, p. 2.

Ḥusayn. Why was this holy day designated as a fast day? Some believe that the fact that the Jews fasted on the tenth day of *Tishre* prompted the Prophet Muḥammad to command Moslems to fast as well, since Moslems are more worthy that the Jews to honor the day.

'Abū Mūsā wrote: "'Āshūrā' Day was the day that the Jews honored and exalted. In particular, this was the holy day of the Jews who lived in Khaybar on the Arabian Peninsula, who fasted and celebrated 'Āshūrā' Day. Then the Prophet Muḥammad, may his name be blessed, said, "You will fast on this day. You are more worthy."[15]

Additional reasons offered for designating 'Āshūrā' Day as a fast day are: the prophets used to fast on this day, the Prophet Muḥammad himself would fast on 'Āshūrā' Day; the Prophet Muḥammad ordered his followers to fast on 'Āshūrā' Day; the Shī'ite custom is to fast on 'Āshūrā' Day in order to identify with and have compassion upon Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet, who was cruelly murdered on this day; out of compassion for the body of Ḥusayn that was cut with the sword, on the decapitated head of Ḥusayn, on his body that horses trampled upon; Ḥusayn's baby who was killed by an arrow, out of compassion on the one of whom it is said: Whoever loves Ḥusayn God will love and welcome to the Garden of Eden.[16]

The Merits of Fasting on 'Āshūrā' Day

Said the messenger of God: he who fasts on 'Āshūrā' Day will be inscribed as if he fasted and prayed for sixty years.

And he who fasts on 'Āshūrā' Day will be inscribed for a reward of the seven heavens. And he who breaks the fast of the faithful and feeds him, will be considered as if he fed the entire nation, the prayers of Allah be upon him and upon his family. And he who satisfies his hunger on 'Āshūrā' Day God will raise in stature in the Garden of Eden by many levels, as many as the hairs on his head.

God will increase the income of he who deals kindly with the members of his family on this day for that entire year. The 'Āshūrā' Holiday is as worthy as seventy holy days. And the dogma of dogmas, the fast of the 'Āshūrā' Day atones for all sins.[17]

[15] al-Yaḥṣubiyy, , 1998, 4/84. See also: Khaṭṭāb, 1950, Vol. 1, pp. 364-368.
[16] Jamāl al-Dīn b. al-Wāhd, 1948, pp. 98-100.
[17] Khawārizim, 1948, p. 1-2.

ʿĀshūrāʾ Day as Opposed to Yom Kippur

"And it shall be a statute for ever unto you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls … For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleans you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord."[18] The three central elements of Yom Kippur in Judaism — afflicting the soul, atonement for sins, and purification — are also important elements of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day.

Moslem believers who sanctify ʿĀshūrāʾ Day by fasting attain atonement for sins. This day and this fast are for the purpose of atoning for sins once a year, in a form reminiscent of the atonement for sins in Judaism, as it is written "… to make atonement for the children of Israel because of all their sins once in the year …"[19]

The primary definition of the word *kippur* (atonement) is atonement for sins, but in the Bible it is used in other ways as well. It is used in the context of defense — Jacob sends Esau a gift in order to prevent him from attacking the camp: "…For he said: 'I will appease him …"[20] A similar meaning appear in the book of Exodus; there the ransom serves to replace the punishment: "If there be laid on him a ransom …."[21] Finally, the sacrifice brought to the priests in the Temple serves as atonement, and the living blood that is spilled atones and purifies. "As hath been done this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make atonement for you."[22]

In the following pages we will discuss the differences and similarities between the two fast days.

Points of Comparison

At first glance there is no similarity between Yom Kippur and ʿĀshūrāʾ Day whatsoever. Yom Kippur is a religious holiday encompassing commandments between man and his fellow and between man and his Maker. It is a sabbath of solemn rest, the most important holiday in Judaism. Though ʿĀshūrāʾ Day is a religious holiday, it is mainly a political commemoration and a day of national mourning. Yom Kippur has none of the political connotations that characterize ʿĀshūrāʾ Day.

[18] Leviticus 16:29-30.
[19] *Ibid.*, 16:34.
[20] Genesis 32:21.
[21] Exodus 21:29.
[22] Leviticus 8:34, Leibtag.

Moreover, the Yom Kippur prayers take place in a closed place, within the walls of the synagogue, while the rituals of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day usually take place in the streets and public plazas; Jews wear white holiday clothes in order to come close to God, while the Shīʿites dress in black and strike their faces with their hands in grief.

Another difference is that while the Shīʿites grieve and lament their defeat in battle 1300 years ago, the Jews remember the miracles and deliverance that God performed for them. "It is he who redeemed us from the hand of kings, even our King, who delivered us from the grasp of all tyrants; the God, who on our behalf dealt out punishment to our adversaries; who doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number."[23] However, the Shīʿites do not believe that their God deserted them. On the contrary, they are certain that God was with Ḥusayn in that battle, and had he wanted to he could have over come his enemies easily, but he chose death in order to atone by his death for the sins of his people.

Notwithstanding, we see fit to draw a comparison, as many elements of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day are reminiscent of the Jewish Yom Kippur, sometimes bearing a remarkable resemblance. We will start with the date on which the holiday falls for the two peoples.

The dates of the holidays: ʿĀshūrāʾ Day falls on the tenth day of the month of *Muḥarram*, which is the first month of the Hijra year. Yom Kippur falls on the tenth day of *Tishre*, the tenth day of the first month of the Jewish year.

The obligation to fast: The commandment to fast on Yom Kippur is one of the most important in Judaism. So much so, that everyone must fast and he who does not fast is condemned to death: "For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from his people."[24] The Shīʿites also believe that it is designated as an annual fast day in order to atone for the sins of the faithful, and whoever does not fast on that day must die.

It is to be noted that several scholars are of the opinion that the very designation of ʿĀshūrāʾ as a fast day took place because of the Jewish fast on the tenth of *Tishre*, and thus it was the Jewish day of atonement that motivated the Prophet Muḥammad to command Moslems to fast on that day.

Prayer and thanksgiving: One of the functions of this holiday is to thank God for the miracles and wonders that he performed for the Moslem nation, and because he chose the Moslems of all the nations. It is enough to compare this faith to the verse from the Yom Kippur prayers: "Thou hast

[23] Authorized Daily Prayer Book, 1965.
[24] Leviticus 23:29.

chosen us from all peoples; thou hast loved us and taken pleasure in us …"[25]

Suffering and anguish: The suffering of Ḥusayn and the suffering of the faithful, is perhaps the main characteristic of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day, is also an important characteristic of Yom Kippur: the Torah says "… and you shall afflict your souls" (Numbers 29:7).

The Gemara speaks of five types of afflictions: "On Yom Kippur it is forbidden to eat or drink or wash or anoint oneself or to wear shoes or to engage in marital relations" (Yoma, 72, 73) That is to say, these prohibitions apply to everything that can cause pleasure: eating and drinking, bathing, wearing shoes, and the pleasures of the body. These five afflictions are juxtaposed with the five books of the Pentateuch, the five senses, the five times that the word "soul" appears in the scriptural reading on the Day of Atonement, and the five prayers unique to Yom Kippur that are offered on this day: the evening prayer, the morning prayer, the additional service, the afternoon prayer, and the conclusion service.

Similar prohibitions apply on the fast of ʿĀshūrāʾ. The prohibitions apply to any activity that can cause pleasure: eating drinking, bathing, wearing shoes, and the pleasures of the body.

Lamentation and confession: Songs of lamentation accompany ʿĀshūrāʾ Day, both during the rituals and in the dramas composed to honor the day. Sad melodies, especially the melody of *Kol Nidre*, accompany Yom Kippur. The melody of *Kol Nidre* which opens the fast, "is completely wrapped in grief, a long night song of sorrowful men approach knocking at the door of repentance and murmuring in contrition, this sad prayer is called *Kol Nidre*."[26]

The ten "Days of Awe": In Judaism Yom Kippur is preceded by the ten days of repentance, whose function is to prepare the heart. "Repentance and crying is befitting to the world — during the ten days of repentance they are the most befitting." Not only for the individual, but for the public. When they cry wholeheartedly they are answered. (From the Rambam's *Laws of Repentance*).

These days are characterized by requests for forgiveness and pardon. Forgiveness not only between Israel and his God but also between man and his fellow. The key aspect of the public prayer "We have sinned, " "For the sin that we have committed before you whether under duress or eagerly…"

ʿĀshūrāʾ Day is also characterized by the preceding ten days, days dominated by crying and mourning, but in a different sense. Although the faith-

[25] Authorized Daily Prayer Book, 1965.
[26] Lanoi, 1971, p. 228.

ful confess their sins, there are no long lists of sins, but rather one sin: the faithful request Ḥusayn's forgiveness for deserting him and letting him die, but also aim to avenge his blood.[27]

During the Days of Awe there is both a personal and public **confession**, in both communities.

Day of Judgement: The most characteristic theme in both religions is the faith that fasting and prayer are for the purpose of deferring Judgement Day. On this day God sits on his throne of majesty and sentences souls to life or death. In Judaism, "Prayer, repentance, and charity avert the harsh decree." On ʿĀshūrāʾ Day as wel, purification through ritual bestows upon the faithful the merit to live another year: This is the Judgment day on which it is determined on high who will live and who will die.

Summary

The central significance of Yom Kippur is its function as a day of fasting and atonement for sins, asking for forgiveness from one's neighbor. This also the significance of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day, which is meant to preserve the memory of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the father of the Shīʿite community, to request forgiveness and atone for sins that the community has committed by deserting him to die.

Repentance, fasting, affliction of souls and purification through ritual bestow on the faithful the merit to continue living their lives. ʿĀshūrāʾ Day is the Day of Judgment, when it is decreed on high who will live and who will die. All these points evoke, despite the great differences, characteristics of the Jewish Yom Kippur.

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[27] Halm, 1997, p. 42. See also Chelkowski, 1979, p. 85.

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KHALID SINDAWI

A COMPARISON OF 'ASHURA' DAY AND GOOD FRIDAY CHRISTIAN RITUALS

Introduction

'Ashura' Day, the tenth day of the month of Moharram, marks the day of the murder of Husayn Ibn 'Ali at Karbala' by the Umayyads in the year 680. On this day the Shi'ites fast, mourn for Husayn and perform religious rituals in his memory.

According to the Christian faith, Good Friday, also known as Great Friday, is the day of Jesus crucifixion. On this day masses are said, and it is a memorial day of prayer and mourning.

Every year since Husayn's murder the Shi'ites have performed religious rituals during the first ten days of the month of Moharram in his memory. *Inter alia* they re-enact the story of his killing, a folk story-teller reads the story at holy places designated for this purpose (such as the Husayniyyat, halls built mainly for Shi'ite community assemblies, in order to hear the story of Husayn's killing)[1].

In like manner the Shi'ites perform social rites during the first ten days of Moharram, cook special types of foods and bake special cakes, and even wear distinctive dress. At the end of Ashura' Day they begin to count "the forty"[2] (at the end of which the day commemorating the return of Husayn`s head from Damascus and its burial together with his body at Karbala' is marked). This period of forty days is a time of mourning. In the Shi'ite ceremonies one can find much similarity to the Christian rituals, especially in the rituals conducted by Catholics in the orient, with respect to the Friday of Jesus' crucifixion and the Week of Affliction. Apparently the Shi'ites were influenced by the Christian rites and imitated them.

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1. The folk story-teller is called a *Khatib Minbar Husayni*, i.e. one who preaches from a stage about the killing of Husayn Ibn 'Ali among the Shi'ite in Arab countries. There are renowned preachers of this type, and videotapes and audiotapes of their presentations are sold in shops. An example of such a famous preacher is 'Abd al-Zahra' al-Ka'bi — well-known in Iraq, Husayn al-Sayyid Shubbar in Qatar, and others. For details see:Muhammad Jawad Mughaniyya, *Khutaba' al-Minbar Husayni*, *al-Mawsim*, vol. 12, 1991, pp. 245-248. He lists 27 preachers and includes their photographs.

2. On The Forty among the Shi'ites see: Mahmoud Ayoub, " 'Arba'in", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 11, London Boston and Heney, p. 275. See also, 'Ibrahim al-Haydari, Trajidya Karbala', Dar al-Saqi Press, 1st ed., London, 1999, p. 131-137.

The purpose of this article is to try to find a point of comparison for the similarity between the Shi'ite holy day and the Christian Good Friday of the crucifixion and the associated rituals.

What is Ashura' Day?

Ashura' Day has many merits in Shi'ite belief. The Shi'ites enumerate the following:

On this day God created heaven and earth; Noah left the ark, the sea parted before the Children of Israel on Ashura' Day, Husayn's mother Fatima was born, and Husayn and Hasan were both born on Ashura' Day.

Researchers differ on the origin of the name Ashura'. Some believe that the name derives from the Hebrew word *'ishir* (the tenth day of the month of Moharram, while others say that the reason for the name Ashura' is that on that day God bestowed the following ten miracles upon ten prophets:

On this day God forgave Adam's sin, Noah's ark came to rest on al-Judi (Ararat), Abraham was born on that day, God rescued Joseph from the pit, God parted the sea before Moses when he left Egypt, God forgave David for his sin, God rescued Yunis (Jonah) from the belly of the whale, Jesus was born and ascended to heaven on the same date, God raised Muhammad and chose him over all the other prophets, and God elected the Moslem nation and chose it over all other nations of the earth[3].

Ashura' day was chosen as an annual fast day to atone for sins, to purify the faithful, and to thank God for the wonders and miracles that he performed for the Moslem nation. The origin of the custom and of the annual rites in memory of Husayn is the event of Karbala'. Therefore we will open with some background explaining this historic event and its importance in the development of Shi'ism.

Historical Background: The Battle of Karbala'

On the tenth day ('Ashura') of the month of Moharram in the year 61 of the Hegira (10.10.680), a battle broke out at Karbala' between Husayn Ibn 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, the Shi'ite 'imam, and the army of 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad (d. 686), the Umayyad viceroy, at Kufa. Husayn and many of his family and followers were slaughtered, and his head was sent to Caliph Yazid in Damascus together with his captive wives and sisters[4].

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3. Khalid Sindawi, " 'Ashura' Day and Yom Kippur," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 38, 2001, University of Melbourne, pp. 200-202.

4. 82 women were taken captive, the most prominent of whom were Husayn's sisters. One was called Zaynab (d. 682) and the other was called Umm Kulthum (d. 681), Husayn's daughter Sukayna (d. 735) was also captured. These three women play an important role against the Umayyads; especially Zaynab, when she argued with Caliph Yazîd about the virtues of *Ahl al-Bayt*. For more information on the subject, see, for example, Abu al-Qasim al-Dibaji, *Zaynab al-Kubra batalatu al-Hurriyya*, Mu'assasat al-Balagh Press, 2nd ed., Beirut,

The background to the battle was the struggle over the succession and the authority to stand at the head of Islam. In 632 the prophet Muhammad died, and authority passed to his close friends, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali. Their rule was known as “the Period of the Four Caliphs” (632-661). At that time the foundations of Moslem government were established for the centuries to follow, but problems also arose which subsequently brought about a schism in Islam. Though questions of authority were left open, until then it was clear who was to stand at the head of the new Islamic dominion.

'Ali Ibn 'Abu Talib (killed in 661), cousin and son-in-law of the prophet was chosen as the fourth Caliph, and following his election a civil war broke out which led to his murder four years later. In his place the Umayyad caliph Mu'awiya rose to power, and after his death his son Yazid (d. 683) succeeded him. Husayn Ibn 'Ali, 'Ali’s second son, decided to demand the right to succeed to the caliphate for himself and his followers; he and his men refused to swear loyalty to Caliph Yazid.

In 680 Husayn left hijaz on his way to Kufa, in southern Iraq, in order to stand at the head of an anti-Umayyad army. As ’imam of the Shi'ites and successor to the prophet Muhammad, he believed that his claim to succession was compelling. However the people of Kufa yielded to Yazid’s pressure and refused to join the battle which ended in the defeat of Husayn and his followers. Husayn was killed at the battle of Karbala' together with his supporters and some of his family[5].

This is the origin of the sense of guilt accompanying the faithful for abandoning Husayn, and one of the main reasons for the deep mourning and self-reproach accompanying his memorial day. The death of the grandson of Muhammad, and his family — who were also descendants of the prophet — in a campaign against the Umayyads, who were (from the Shi'ite point of view) usurpers, was perceived as martyrdom, and deeply touched the feelings of many who supported and loved the prophet’s family. This historic event gave enormous impetus to the religious development of 'Ali’s faction.

Initially it was only a struggle over the succession, but gradually theological elements crept in. The personalities of 'Ali and his son Husayn lost a dimension of reality which was replaced by religious significance. Fruitless quarrels led to the creation of an elaborate martyrology which served as a powerful motive in the development of Shi'a, and Husayn became a martyr, a hero who died sanctifying God.

1997. See also Muhsin al-Mu'allim, *Zaynab wa-al-zalimun*, Dar-al-hadi Press, 1st ed., Beirut, 1997.

5. Khalid Sindawi, *The Maqatil in Shi'ite Literature* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Hebrew), Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 2000, pp. 1-2.

The Battle of Karbala' left a deep impression on Shi'ite consciousness. Karbala' embodies both a religious symbol and political struggle. Husayn Ibn 'Ali represents the eternal struggle between liberation and subjugation, between the forces of evil and the forces of good. In every generation there is a Husayn fighting beside God, and his oppressor, Yazid, fighting beside Satan. The historical event remained so vivid in the collective Shi'ite consciousness that it produced the motto: "Every place is Karbala', and every day is 'Ashura' Day."

The Battle of Karbala' and murder of Husayn are the most outstanding events that shaped the history of Islam. The historical memory of Husayn's murder and the ceremonies of 'Ashura' Day created a powerful religious symbol that crystallized the Shi'ites' identity and religious feeling, making them distinct from the Sunnis, the orthodox stream of Islam[6].

The collective Shi'ite memory coalesced and preserved the drama of the Battle of Karbala' and bestowed great symbolic significance upon it. The perpetuation of Husayn's memory perpetuates his connection with the twelve 'imams, the focus of Shi'ite faith. From Husayn's suffering and anguish emerged the model embodying an exemplary way of life of self-sacrifice for a holy cause. Husayn was a "prince of martyrs" (*sayyid al-shuhada'*·) and his suffering is perceived as the essence of historical injustice committed against the family of the prophet. It turned the Shi'ites into a separate community whose banner is suffering. Husayn's martyrdom became the "martyrdom of suffering" which became one of the foundations of Shi'ite ideology. The suffering of the 'imam is an opening to redemption, and his self-sacrifice purifies his faithful. Husayn died so that Islam could remain a pure ideal of justice and truth[7].

'Ashura' Rituals

'Ashura' Day rituals focus on lamentation, mourning and self-affliction (both spiritual and physical) to memorialize the defeat at Karbala'. The ritual lamentations, pantomime and plays depict the events of the battle and the defeat. It is not merely a sign of grief over the death of a leader. It is an atonement ritual for sins — the sins of both the community and the individual.

The ceremonies take place during the first ten days of the first month of the Moslem year, the month of al-Moharram. Their emotional tone is one of lamentation, fasting and mourning. The primary cause is a sense of guilt and

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6. Hagai Ram, "*HaMofet Shel Karbala': Mitos Mechonen v'Gius Hamonim BaMahapecha HaIslamit Shel Iran*" (Hebrew), The Example of Karbala' : The Catalyzing Mythos of Mustering the Masses in the Islamic Revolution of Iran, *Zmanim* 62, 1998, p. 52.

7. Yitzchak Nakash, "An Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of 'Ashura'," in *Die Welt des Islam*, vol. 33, Leiden 1993, p. 161.

contrition. The aim is to be worthy of Husayn’s forgiveness for the sin of deserting him to his death.

The first 'Ashura' Day ritual took place in 684, four years after Husayn’s murder. It was a collective act of self sacrifice: the faithful spent a day and a night at the grave of the *imam*, mourning and lamenting, and afterwards they sent out on a march of death to the battlefield of Karbala'. At the heart of the ceremony was the march of flagellation (*Tatbir*), which was first performed in 963 with the decline of the Sunni regime. The ceremony took its final, present form, at the end of the 15th century in Iran.

Characteristics of the Shi'ite Ceremony

The rituals and the mourning (Majalis Husayniyya) continue for ten days, like Husayn’s sojourn at Karbala' from the moment of his arrival to the moment of his murder. The faithful fast, refrain from shaving, and subsist only on water. Occasionally they don’t bathe or change clothes. Some refrain from wearing shoes. Many refrain even from drinking water because of the fact that that Husayn suffered from thirst when he died[8].

During the last two days, the ceremony includes self-flagellation with whips and stabbing with daggers and swords. The faithful believe that the souls of Husayn and his followers who died during the month of Moharram ascended straight to Paradise. This faith causes them to afflict themselves hoping to die like Husayn.

Another of their beliefs is that Husayn knew of his impending death and accepted it in order to atone for the sins of others. Had he not been willing to die, no force in the world could have overcome him. Husayn, like Jesus, died for his people, and by his death he atoned for the sins of his people[9].

Each of the ten days of the 'Ashura' ritual is intended to remind the faithful of another death of one of Husayn’s company, and illustrates another

8. It should be noted that Jesus also suffered from thirst at the time that he died, when he was captured by his enemies they bound him and then one of the men mocked him, saying: “… for he said, I am the Son of God.” (Matthew 27:43). He suffered thirst at the time that he died (John 19:28); and likewise Husayn, before his soul left him, said to his killers, If you must kill me, let me drink a sip of water. His killer refused, and mocked him saying, In a few minutes you will taste death sip after sip. (Source: Abu Mikhnaf Lut Ibn Yahya, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, ed. 'Umar 'Abu Nasr, Beirut, 1971, p. 94. Thus we see that Husayn, like Jesus, will quench his thirst in heaven. Jesus will drink from the eternal cup, while Husayn will drink from the spring of Eden, *al-Hawd*.

al-Hawd is the pool or river in Paradise which the apostle’s people will be given to drink on the day of resurrection. (For details, see Thomas Patrick Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, New York, London, 1885, p. 168). Husayn’s father 'Ali guards *al-Hawd*.

9. Heinz Halm, *Shia Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, Princeton, 1997, p. 41. See also: Peter J. Chelkowsky (ed.), *Ta'ziyeh, Ritual and Drama in Iran*, New York University Press and Soroush Press, New York and Tehran, 1979, p. 88.

scene from the Battle of Karbala'. Each day comes to memorialize one of the principle historical events.

From the first to the third day of Moharram Husayn arrives at Karbala' and negotiates unsuccessfully with 'Umar ibn Sa'd, commander of the Umayyad army. The fourth day is dedicated to the memory of al-hurr b. Yazid al-Riyahi al-Tamimi (d. 680), the commander of Yazid's army. He defected to Husayn's camp and died fighting by Husayn's side. The fifth day is dedicated to the slaughter of the young sons of Zaynab, Husayn's sister (d. 682). The sixth day is spent mourning for the death of Husayn's oldest son, 'Ali al-'Akbar (d. 680) at age 18. The boy was wounded by Murra b. Munqidh al-'Abdi while defending his father and died in his father's arms. Sometimes this day is also designated as the day to mourn for the young child who was hit by an arrow in his neck. The seventh day the unfortunate son-in-law al-Qæsim ibn al-Hasan (d. 680) died; he married Husayn's daughter and died on his wedding day. On the eighth day Husayn's half-brother al-'Abbas died (d. 680) his hands were cut off when he went to bring water from the Euphrates to the besieged. The ninth and tenth days are the peak of the 'Ashura' ritual: on those days Husayn himself is mourned. On these days a procession of flagellation with whips takes place. The young men, including small children, take this role; they cut themselves, whip themselves and stab their faces with points of daggers and swords, and thus atone for the sins of the entire community.

Similar Characteristics in the Rituals of the Two Faiths

The Period of Mourning and the Mourning Garments

'Ashura' Day is the day on which Husayn ibn 'Ali was killed. This day is usually marked on a Friday[10]. According to the Christian faith, the crucifixion took place on Friday[11], and the day is called Good Friday.

For the Shi'ites 'Ashura' Day is a day of mourning. People dress in black, black flags fly in Shi'ite towns, and even the walls of the homes are draped in black cloth[12].

In Christianity as well, especially in the eastern churches, Good Friday is a day of mourning[13], and the people dress in black. The icons and statues in the churches are covered in black cloth on this day[14].

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10. Opinions differ regarding the exact day of Husayn's murder. Some claim that he was killed on Saturday or Monday, and not on Friday. For details see: Radiyy al-Din 'Ali b. Musa b. Tawus, *al-Lahuf 'Ala Qatla al-Tufuf*, Matba'at al-'Irfan press, 2d ed., Sayda, 1929, p. 38.

11. See the New Testament, John 18:42.

12. al-Haydai, *Trajidya* …, pp. 114-115.

13. Raji al-'Asmar, *al-'A'yad al-Sha'biyya al-Lubnaniyya*, Grus-press, 1st ed., Tripoli, 1997, p. 30.

Mourning Processions

In every Shi'ite population center the principal rituals takes place, in which all the Shi'ite residents in the area arrive in *Mawakib* processions, each village in a separate procession. At the front of the procession the men walk, wearing white garments and afflicting themselves. The other men follow them, led by the ’imam. They repeat popular Shi'ite sayings as well as rhyming eulogies for Husayn, such as: *'Ayyu Shari'a hallalat qatla al- Husayn ibn 'Ali* (“By what religious law was it permitted to spill Husayn Ibn 'Ali’s blood?”) and *Duqqi al-sadr ya Shi'a wayli wa-waylah 'Ala al Husayn ibn 'Ali la 'ilaha 'ila allah* (“Beat your breasts, O Shi'ites; Alas and woe is me, beat your breasts for Husayn Ibn 'Ali’; there is no God but Allah”) [15].

The Christians of the eastern churches hold processions on Palm Sunday after Good Friday. These processions are held inside the church or outdoors. At the head of the procession is a group of drummers, and the priest follows carrying the New Testament or an icon, and after him the Christian community follows carrying their children and candles, proclaiming, Hosanna to Heaven, Hosanna to the blessed Son of David[16].

The Play, Clothing and Special Foods

The men participating in the mourning processions for Husayn in the 'Ashura' Day dress in white especially for the ritual of self-sacrifice. The men wearing white march at the head of the procession with their heads shaved as a sign of mourning.

These groups of men whip themselves with chains until they bleed, and wound themselves with daggers and swords. This is all to re-enact the martyrdom at the Battle of Karbala' in which they were not able to participate[17], and as a sign of Husayn’s self-sacrifice[18].

In addition to the processions street theatre also takes place in the plazas and public areas, in which the Shi'ites act out the battle and the events in which Husayn and his men were involved at Karbala'. These performances are known in Shi'a as *al-Shabih*[19].

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14. Farouk Ohan, “AT-TA'azi and Good Friday, a Comparative Study (Arabic),” *The Arabist*, Budapest Studies in Arabic 8, 1994, p. 120.

15. My source was a videocassette of the 'Ashura' rituals in southern Lebanon in the village of Kafr-Kila in 1995.

16. Mansur, *al-Mawasim* …, p. 158.

17. Ohan, “AT-TA'AZi …”, p. 128. See also: al-Haydari, Trajidya …, p. 114.

18. Dhaka' al-Hurr al-Khatib, “al-Turath al-Sha'bi al-Dini 'Ashura' " in *al-Mu'tamr al-·Awwal lilthaqafa al-Sha'biyya fi Lubnan*, Halaqat al-hiwar al-Thafaqi Press, Beirut, 1993, p. 346.

19. These performances are called *al-Shabih*. For details see: al-Haydari, *Trajidya* …, p. 122. See also: Ghada Muhammad Salim and Fadil al-Sa'duni, “Thawraf al-Husayn watuqusiha al-Sha'biyya,” *al-Turath al-Sha'bi* vol. 2-3, (1974), Baghdad, pp. 16-17.

See also: Peter Chelkowsky, *Ta'ziyeh and Drama in Iran*, New York, 1979, p. 3.

The Christians also perform plays depicting the events that preceded the crucifixion. Those who play the roles of the disciples are a select group of men chosen by the priest for their roles, just as Jesus selected his disciples. The priest, who plays the role of Jesus, rehearses his part and washes the feet of the disciples[20].

In both rituals the people who play the roles of the enemies are represented as repulsive, the personification of evil. Thus, for example, the character of Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan al-Dababi, who decapitates Husayn, resembles Satan, the symbol of the murderer: he wears red and has horns on his head.

In similar fashion to the white-robed Shi'ites in procession, the Christians in the eastern churches also wear white robes.

An additional interesting detail can be observed: on ‘Ashura’ Day they apply kohl of a type known as antimony (*'uthmud*) to their eyes. The origin of this custom is the belief that Noah’s ark came to rest on Mt Ararat (al-Judi) on ‘Ashura’ Day, and the eyes of those on board were weakened because they stared unceasingly at the sea. Therefore God commanded them to apply antimony kohl to their eyes. This tradition, transmitted by the uncle of the prophet, Ibn 'Abbas, tells that he heard the prophet Muḥammad say: whoever applies antimony kohl to his eyes will never be afflicted with an eye infection[21].

Among the Christians of the eastern churches, especially in Lebanon, we find that on the Wednesday of Holy Week the women apply antimony (*'uthmud*) kohl to their eyes[22]. The origin of this custom is not known to us, and it is possible that the Lebanese Christians were influenced by the Lebanese Shi'ites.

Similar customs exist in the realm of food. The Shi'ites cook specific types of foods for the memorial day of Husayn’s murder. These are sweets of various colors and flavors, and likewise a special cake is baked on 'Ashura' Day[23].

The Christians eat special foods during the period of the forty days, mainly wheat cooked in boiling water, and they eat simple food such as bread with herbs and dried fruit. At the end of the fasting period they bake special cakes, as do the Shi'ites[24].

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20. Ohan, “AT-TA'AZI” …, p. 128.

21. Muhammad Salih al-Bahrani, *al-Manabi' al-Nawra' fî waqa'I' 'Ashura'*. Mu'assasat al-'Alami lilmatbu'at Press, 1st ed., Beirut, 1993, p. 276. See also: ·Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Ibrahim al-Nisaburi, also known as al-Tha'laibi, *Qisas al-·Anbiya' which is called 'Ara'is al-Majalis*, al-Maktaba al-Thaqafiyya Press, Beirut, no date, p. 51.

22. al-·Asmar, *al-A'yad …*, p. 28.

23. Ohan, "AT-TA'AZI" …, p. 120.

24. al-·Asmar, *al-'A'yad …*, p. 28.

Fasting and Eulogy

One of the most important characteristics among both the Christians and the Shi'ites is the fast on the day of mourning and eulogy for their dead leader. The Shi'ites fast on 'Ashura' Day and keep the tradition of the merit of fasting on this day. This is a fast of afflicting the soul and purification through rituals, processions of mourning, and repentance.

The Christians in the eastern churches fast for forty days before Good Friday during the first half of every day[25], and on the Friday commemorating the death of Jesus they fast all day[26].

These are some of the merits of fasting among the Shi'ites: whoever fasts on 'Ashura' Day will be considered as if he had observed the commandment of sixty years of fasting and night prayer; whoever fasts on 'Ashura' Day will receive recompense in the seven heavens; whoever breaks the fast of the faithful by eating will be considered as if he had fed the entire nation; and whoever suffers hunger on 'Ashura' Day will be raised many degrees in stature by God in Paradise[27].

The Shi'ites believe that 'Ashura' Day was declared a fast day in order to atone for sins, and whoever does not fast on this day will be subject to death.

Counting the Days

Husayn Ibn 'Ali arrived at Karbala' on the first day of the month of Moharram and remained there with his people for ten days. On the tenth day he was murdered by the Umayyads. These days are known as “al-Moharram,” and on each of them the faithful read or hear a chapter of the story of the death and suffering of Husayn and his family, as well as lamentations and eulogies from poets or the local ’imæm. The peak of the mourning is on the tenth day, the day on which Husayn was killed[28].

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25. It should be noted that the period of fasting in the fourth century was different for each church. Some of them fasted for three weeks, others fasted for six weeks or seven or eight weeks. In Antioch they would fast for seven weeks: six weeks of “forty” fast, and a week fast for Easter.

All the churches that were associated with the Antioch eastern churches would fast five days a week. On the Sabbath, and every Sunday they would not fast. In Jerusalem the church would fast forty days like Jesus and Moses and Elijah, the great of the prophets of Israel. In Alexandria the fast was six weeks, including the fast of forty days and the fast of Easter.

For more details see Nasrallah Nasrallah, "al-Sawm al-'Arba'ini fî al-Qarn al-Rabi' ", *al-Mashriq*, (1932), pp. 139-146.

26. al-·Asmar, *al-'A'yad* ..., p. 30.

27. For more details on the virtues of fasting on 'Ashura' Day see Sindawi, 'Ashura' …, pp. 208-209.

28. al-Haydai, *Trajidya* …, p. 96 ff. See also: R. Strothman, *Ta'ziya Im Enzyklopädie des Islam*, Bd IV, Leipzig, 1934, s. 770 f.

In Christianity the week in which Good Friday falls is referred to as the week of affliction. This week begins on Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter) and ends on Easter Sunday, the day of the resurrection. This is a week of mourning, in memory of Jesus' suffering, and the faithful attend church and masses and listen to sermons from the priests about Jesus' suffering[29].

Good Friday, just as on 'Ashura' Day, is considered to be the peak of mourning. On this day the Christians of the eastern churches gather flowers and carry them to the churches in order to decorate Jesus' grave — a coffin covered in black. They walk around the coffin in the center of the sanctuary and play sorrowful background music[30].

The counting of forty days is also significant in both rituals.

In Shi'a the period of forty days begins on 'Ashura' Day, and ends on the twentieth day of the month of Safar (the second month of the Moslem calendar, after Moharram), which is called the Fortieth Day. According to Shi'ite tradition, the decapitated head of Husayn Ibn 'Ali was returned to Karbala' and buried together with his body[31] forty days later. This is the origin of the visit of "the forty," also known the visit of the return of Husayn's head from Damascus to Karbala' and its burial together with the body[32].

In Christianity there are forty days of mourning and fasting before Good Friday, in memory of the afflictions that Jesus suffered. The difference is that at the end of this period Jesus ascended to heaven, while in the Shi'ite ritual at the end of the forty days the head was returned to the body and buried with it. Another difference is that in Shi'a the counting of the forty begins the day after 'Ashura' Day while in Christianity it begins before Good Fri-

29. al-·Asmar, *al-'A'yad* …, p. 128. See also, Juni Mansur, *al-'A'yad wa-al-Mawasim fi al-Hadara al-'Arabiyya*, Haifa, 1998, pp. 155-159.

30. al-·Asmar, *al-'A'yad* …, p. 29.

31. It should be noted that there are differences of opinion regarding the place of burial of Husayn's head. Shi'ite literature notes eight potential sites for the place of the head's burial: Karbala', Madina, Halab (Aleppo), Maruw, al-Raqqa, Damsacus, 'Asqalan, and Cairo. For more details see Sindawi, *The Maqætil* …, p. 224. See also: Taqiyy al-Din b. al-'Abbas 'Ahmad b. Taymiyya, *Ra's al- Husayn* (ed. Muhammad Jamil Ghazi), Dar al-Madani Press, Jeddah, 1985, p. 183, 187, 189.

See also: 'Imad al-Din 'Isma'ill b. Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa-al-Nihaya*, Maktabat al-Ma'arif Press, Cairo, 1929, 8:221.

See also: Muhammad Bayyumi Mahran, *al-'Imam al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali*, Dar al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya liltiba'a wa-al-Nashr Press, Beirut, 1940, pp. 156-159.

32. On the Visit of the Forty to Husayn's grave see, for example, 'Abbas al-Qummi, *Mafatih al-Janan* (translated from Persian to Arabic by Muhmmad Rida al-Nuri al-Najafi), Dar al-Mujtaba, 1st ed., Beirut, 1995, p. 502.

It should be noted that the period of forty days is also known in Judaism: "And the flood was forty days over the land" (Genesis 7:17). Likewise Moses remained on Mt. Sinai for forty days and the Children of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years.

day. In any case, for our purposes it is important to stress that in both rituals of the two religions the forty days are counted as days of mourning.

Vowing Vows

The Shi'ites make vows and fulfill them on 'Ashura' Day, especially barren women or women who have no sons. These women vow that if they give birth to boys or if their children recover from serious illness or are saved from danger they will send these children to participate in the processions of men who strike their heads and chests with swords (*Mawakib al-Tatbir*), in a symbolic way[33].

Christians also make vows for their sons on Palm Sunday. Women make vows in which every boy carries a tall candle.

On this day the Christians conduct a mass in church: the children together with their parents march in a procession in church, their lit candles decorated with flowers, and olive branches and palm fronds. At the end of the mass they take the olive branch, flowers and palm fronds home, dry them and keep them in a bag so that they will bring a blessing; some of them use these for healing after they are burned, mixing the ashes with salt or incense and then burning the incense. Some of them use the incense to bring healing and against the evil eye. Likewise some of them put the olive branch over the door of their house to protect it and their children from trouble and disaster and the evil eye; sometimes they put the bag over the wardrobe closet or in a crack in the wall of the house as a sign of good luck.

Lamentations and Eulogies

On the first ten days of the month of Moharram, especially on ‘Ashura’ Day, the Shi'ites recite or listen to eulogies for Husayn Ibn 'Ali read by a specially trained eulogy reader. He also reads chapters of the books of *maqtal* of Husayn, which describe Husayn’s journey from Mecca and Madîna to Karbala' until his murder. These elements are combined with chapters of poetry, and there are special rules on how they are to be chanted. They are chanted before the Shi'ite faithful in a special building built for the purpose, called a *Husayniyya*. The reader applies the art of rhetoric and chants in sorrowful tones that induce sorrow and weeping in the audience, especially when he chants poetry that he himself composed in the local idiom, and the audience begins to groan and weep. Likewise he uses gestures to act out the scenario. The reader usually mentions the superior virtues of Husayn and the character of the men who fought by his side. The reader’s virtuosity is measured by his ability to bring his audients to tears[34].

33. al-Haydai, *Trajidya* … p. 114.

34. Among the most famous readers is 'Abd al-Zahra' al-Ka'bi of Iraq. See footnote 1.

The Christians on the first day of Holy Week come to church to participate in the mass and hear the priest's sermon about the stories of Jesus suffering until his arrest, crucifixion and death[35].

On Good Friday the priest reads one of the laments of Jeremiah (8:2-12), psalms, chapters from the Acts of the Apostles and other excerpts from the New Testament, and delivers a sermon[36].

SUMMARY

In the rituals of 'Ashura' Day among the Shi'ites one can distinguish elements and characteristics similar to those practiced on Good Friday among the Christians. They are:

1. In Christianity, the day of Jesus' crucifixion was a Friday at the end of the Week of Affliction; in Shi'a the day of the killing of Husayn takes place on the tenth day of the month of Moharram.

2. In Christianity forty days of mourning and fasting are kept before Good Friday; in Shi'a forty days of mourning are observed after 'Ashura' Day.

3. Within both communities it is customary to fast and afflict the body during these days; and to eat special foods and cakes at the end of the fast.

4. Good Friday, at the end of the forty days, is the memorial day of Jesus' ascent to heaven among the Christians; while in Shi'a the end of the forty days is marked by the day of the return of Husayn's head with his body.

In both rituals the focus is on the last days of the lives of Jesus or Husayn, they are eulogized and their memory is sanctified.

35. Mansur, al-'A'yad …, pp. 155-159.

36. Ohan, "AT-TA'AZI"…, pp. 136-137.

THE PLACE OF ANGELS IN THE *MAQÂTIL* LITERATURE

KHALID AHMAD SINDAWI

Abstract

THE Shî'ite *maqâtil* literature, which concerns the killing of Ḥusain bin 'Alî in A.D. 680, contains recurrent elements and motifs. One of these is angels. The role of the angels in the literary genre of the *maqâtil* is to bless the birth of Ḥusain bin 'Alî, and also to reveal the future. They likewise console the Prophet Muḥammad over the killing of Ḥusain, eulogise him, visit his grave, and protect it. They greet visitors to the grave and afford them assistance.

Introduction

The angel, prevalent in all the monotheistic religions, generally appears as a spirit creature who fulfils God's will and acts as His messenger. The Hebrew as well as the Arabic word for angel, deriving from the same root, in fact means a messenger, God's emissary.

An angel as God's messenger is found as early as the Ugaritic epic poetry, when El (the Canaaite God) sends two angels to a gathering of gods, with the request that they hand over Baal. In the doctrine of Zarathustra six angels appear together with the supreme God, and each of them is in charge of one of the elements of nature. Other angels protect the order in the world, ensure the process of the heavenly bodies and receive into their hands the souls of the righteous on their deaths to convey them to the Garden of Eden. Every person has a guardian angel, called Parawashi.

The personal angel, the "angel who guards me from all evil", appears occasionally in Judaism, and is also known in Christianity and Islam. This is in addition to the myriad angels who hover around the Throne of Glory, serving the Holy One, blessed be He, and constituting the "celestial retinue". These

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angels assume diverse forms and are revealed in various ways. First we shall look at the manner of their appearance and their treatment in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Thereafter we shall pass to the special function assigned to angels in the Shî'ite *maqâtil* literature.

A. Angels in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

In Judaism the status of the angel is located between man and God. Angels were created to serve God and to connect him to humankind. In the Bible angels are mentioned time and again, for example: "The Lord is sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven are standing beside Him on His right hand and on His left".[1] They also appear for particular missions, such as the three angels who visited Abraham to inform him of the birth of Isaac, the angels who appeared before Lot, or the angel who annunciated the birth of Sampson. The Bible also tells of angels of destruction, like the one who, drawn sword in hand, gave news of the pestilence in the time of the House of David.[2]

An important role is assigned to angels in Christianity too. The angel Gabriel heralded the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Angels uttered songs of glory at the birth of Jesus, and accompanied him to fortify his spirit along the path of travail that led to his death. An angel rolled away the stone over his grave and announced his resurrection. Similarly, angels accompanied Ḥusain bin 'Alî, both at his birth and at his death at the battle of Karbala.

In Islam the functions of angels are similar to those in Judaism. The Qur'ân mentions the two ministering angels, Gabriel and Michael. Of Gabriel, it is said that he revealed God's Word to Muḥammad. The angel of Death, called 'Izrâ'îl, is alluded to. Many stories are told of him, most of which have parallels in the Hebrew Aggadah. However, the Islamic tradition added many more to the angels in Judaism who constitute the "exalted community". One of them is Isrâfîl, who will sound the trumpet of the Day of Judgement to herald the resurrection of the dead.

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Sûrah XXXV in the Qur'ân, known as the "*sûrah* of the angels", begins: "Praise be to Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth who appointed the angels as messengers having wings two, three and four. . .".[3] The number of wings varies according to the role and status of the angels. Gabriel, whose status is most high, is described by Maḥmûd Salîm al-Ḥût as possessing 600 pairs of wings.[4]

The angels serve God and obey his commands, and do not descend from their abode in heaven except at an express order, to perform tasks or on special occasions, such as on the night of al-Qadr mentioned in *sûrah* XCVII (celebrated between the 26th and the 27th of the month of Ramaḍân). The number of angels is very great; no one knows the figure except God: "None knoweth the hosts of thy Lord save Him. . .".[5]

In Islam the angels are depicted as amazingly beautiful; they are neither male nor female. They require neither food nor drink and they have no need for sleep. They do not grow weary and they never despair. Their speed is greater than the speed of light, and humans have no instruments to measure the speed. They also possess enormous knowledge, imparted to them by God, and have lofty qualities, such as wisdom and kind-heartedness. They are God's ambassadors, and His emissaries on earth.[6]

B. Angels in the Shî'ite Maqâtil *Literature*

When Ḥusain bin 'Alî was killed in A.D. 680, the Shî'ites began to compose works to describe the events of his dramatic slaying. These compositions are called *maqâtil*. They contained constant elements, which in time became motifs in the *maqâtil* literature.[7]

Among these motifs, the angels occupy a notable place. The foremost angels mentioned in the *maqâtil* are Jibrâ'îl, Mîkâ'îl and Isrâfîl. Apart from them, mention is made of *al-Rûḥâniyyûn* and *al-Muqarrabûn* (the angels close to the Throne of Glory), and more angels whose names are not signified.

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First we shall examine the nature and function of each angel in the Muslim tradition, and then consider the place of the angels in the *maqâtil* literature.

1. The Angel Jibrâ'îl (Gabriel)

The angel Jibrâ'îl has the most honoured role in the Muslim tradition. He it is who appeared before Prophet Muḥammad in his vision, and who unveiled to him the secrets of the Qur'ân and the principles of Muslim law.

Jibrâ'îl is first mentioned in the traditions of the start of the prophecy in *sûrah* II:97. Next he is mentioned in the following verse as the partner of Mikâ'îl, and in a third verse he figures as the guardian angel of the Prophet and of two of his wives (IV:66).

In addition to his role as conveyor of the Qur'ân, Jibrâ'îl has a primary mission in the traditions of the *maghâzî* (invasion), and he appears everywhere in the traditions of the *faḍâ'il* (virtues) as the speaker of the praises of the Prophet and of his friends. The interpretive approach that defines Jibrâ'îl through epithets and attributes drawn from the Qur'ân rests on a textual exegetic base.

The commentators ascribed to Jibrâ'îl the following titles: of holy spirit, of faithful spirit, of great power, of comely appearance, of elevated status, possessor of authority, loyal. Sometimes he is called "teacher of the law", for Jibrâ'îl is he who transmitted the fundamentals of the law to the Prophet. At times Jibrâ'îl is mentioned in the Qur'ân not explicitly by name.[8]

Jibrâ'îl instituted the times of prayer, and the direction of prayer towards the Ka'bah in Makkah. He ordained the inclusion of the *'umrah* on the *Ḥajj*, namely the pilgrimage to Makkah. (This is the so-called "minor *Ḥajj*" which, unlike the *Ḥajj* proper, need not be performed at a particular time of the year, and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies.) This ritual is to be conducted "until the day of the resurrection of

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the dead". Likewise Jibrâ'îl commanded recital of the *talbiyah* ("obeying") out loud. He taught the Prophet the *wuḍû'* ("cleanliness"), namely the ritual ablution before prayer. He instructed in the laws of judgement, and ordered the safeguarding of the status of the protected person. He also taught the cherishing of the status of ancestors who had died before the rise of Islam and forbade the drinking of wine. He prescribed the utterance of "There is no God but Allah" as a means of obtaining absolution for sins.

In addition to these functions, Jibrâ'îl is present in purely *faḍâ'il* (virtues) traditions, from which a continuous intimate link arises between the angel and the Prophet Muḥammad. Jibrâ'îl protects Muḥammad and speaks his praises and the praises of his friends. He also participates in the *maghâzî* (battles), and appears abundantly as warrior, bringer of news, rescuer, and advisor of the Prophet. At the battle of Badr Jibrâ'îl participates as a horseman riding a steed called Haizûm, and in that battle he also appears in the image of al-Zubair ibn al-'Awwâm (d. A.D. 656), wearing a yellow turban. Jibrâ'îl is present at *ghazwat al-Qaḍiyya* ("the war of al-Qaḍiyya") wearing a turban of silk and gold.[9]

At *ghazwat* Ḥusain ("the war of Ḥusain") (A.D. 630) Jibrâ'îl encourages the Prophet and prays for Allah's salvation, and at *ghazwat* Ghaṭafân he saves the Prophet from one who plots to murder him with a drawn sword. At times he brings intelligence of the movements of the enemy, the *mushrikûn* ("polytheists"), and when heroes fall in the *jihâd* ("holy war") he announces their reward in heaven. For example, he states the reward of Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubaid-Allâh (d. A.D. 656) on the day of the resurrection of the dead.[10]

Jibrâ'îl, like the other angels, is graced with the power to assume various forms. He appeared before Mary, the mother of Jesus, in human form; he is known to have appeared before the Prophet Muḥammad several times, each in a different form. Once he assumed the likeness of a man named Diḥyah ibn Khalîfah al-Kalbî (d. A.D. 665) and once the likeness of a Bedouin.

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Jibrâ'îl is thus accorded special importance in Islamic tradition generally, and the *maqâtil* literature especially, wherein he fulfils several functions:

a. Herald and Blesser. Jibrâ'îl informed the Prophet Muḥammad of the birth of his grandson, and immediately after the birth he came to bless him. He also appeared to the infant Husain together with the angel Mîkâ'îl. The two angels approached the newborn babe, spoke to him softly and fondled him.[11]

b. Foreteller of the Future. Jibrâ'îl foretold the Prophet Muḥammad of the fate awaiting his grandson Husain. The *maqâtil* literature relates that when Ḥusain was one year old, seated in his grandfather's lap, the angel Jibrâ'îl appeared and informed the Prophet Muḥammad that his grandson's future was his being slaughtered by a ruler by the name of Yazîd. It would be on 'Âshûrâ' Day, at Karbala in Iraq, on the banks of the River Euphrates. A year later, when Ḥusain was aged two, Jibrâ'îl appeared once more to the Prophet Muḥammad and told him of the expected killing of Ḥusain, and even showed the Prophet the place where his grandson was to be slain.[12]

When the Prophet learned of his grandson's destiny, he said, *Innâ lillâhi wa innâ ilaihi râji'ûn* ("Lo! we are Allah's and lo! Unto Him we are returning") (II:156) and tears streamed from his eyes. When asked for the reason for his weeping, he told his entourage the things the angel Jibrâ'îl had said to him.[13]

c. Comforter. Jibrâ'îl voiced his condolences to the Prophet on the death of his grandson Ḥusain. When the convoy bearing Ḥusain's head and the women captives to the caliph Yazîd reached Damascus, the *Jathîlîq*,[14] leader of the Christians, told the caliph of a dream he had had in which the angels, led by Jibrâ'îl, clustered round the Prophet and expressed their commiseration at the slaying of Ḥusain.

d. Avenger. Jibrâ'îl together with a large company of angels went to the Prophet Muḥammad and asked his permission to avenge Ḥusain's blood, but the Prophet refused to grant their request.

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He requested them to forgo this mission, as he himself would settle accounts with the killers of Ḥusain on Judgement Day.

2. The Angel Mîkâ'îl (Michael)

Mîkâ'îl is considered among the most revered of angels. He is the angel charged with livelihood, with wisdom and knowledge, with rain and vegetation. He is described as one of the angels closest to God. His image is fearful: if he opens his mouth all the heavens are inside it like a mustard grain in the sea. Should he appear before humans, the denizens of heaven and earth alike would be seared by his light.[15]

Of him it is likewise said that since the day hellfire was created, no trace of a smile has formed on his lips.[16]

The angel Mîkâ'îl is mentioned several times in the *maqâtil* literature, mostly together with Jibrâ'îl. He accompanied the latter in his revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad and to the infant Ḥusain; he took part in the battle of Badr alongside Jibrâ'îl and Isrâfîl; he spoke his condolences to the Prophet on the death of Husain; and he visits Ḥusain's grave together with the rest of the angels. Mîkâ'îl also went to the Prophet to beg leave to avenge Husain's blood.[17]

3. The Angel Isrâfîl

Isrâfîl is not mentioned by name in the Qur'ân but he appears in the canonical collections of traditions in the text of prayer. According to a series of traditions, the Prophet Muḥammad would open his evening prayer saying, "*Allâhumma Rabb Jibrâ'îl wa Mîkâ'îl wa Isrâfîl* ("Lord God of Gabriel, Michael, and Isrâfîl").[18]

According to one of the traditions, Isrâfîl was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad three years before Jibrâ'il. He prepared the Prophet for the acceptance of his mission, and afterwards Jibrâ'îl assumed his place. In the *maghâzî* tradition Isrâfîl appears as a participant in the battle of Badr together with Jibrâ'îl and Mîkâ'îl. Another tradition has it that in the sermon

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preached by 'Alī, the leader of the faithful at Kufa, he related that when quenching his thirst at the well of Badr three strong winds blew. One wind was Jibrā'īl, who was with the Prophet, another was Mīkā'īl, who was at the right hand of the Prophet and Abū Bakr, and the third was Isrāfīl, who was at the left hand of the Prophet, where 'Alī also was.[19]

In eschatological traditions Isrāfīl fulfils a special role. He is the possessor of the trumpet (*ṣāḥib al-ṣūr*), in charge of sounding the call on Resurrection Day. Isrāfīl is portrayed as having his feet reaching the Seventh Land and his head reaching the Throne of Glory. The trumpet, by this account, is constantly in his mouth, and his look is directed at the Throne of Glory in expectation of receiving the signal to sound the blast that will inspire life in the dead.[20]

Isrāfīl is also said to be *'Aẓīm al-Sha'n* ("holder of important status") and to have four wings that span the length of the world. He is in charge of the tablet preserved in heaven on which is recorded all that has happened and that will happen on earth. God granted this honour to Isrāfīl because he is the first angel who bowed down to Adam in heaven.

Isrāfīl appears several times in the *maqātil* literature. In one tradition he comes with the angels Jibrā'īl and Mīkā'īl and with *al-Karūbiyyūn, al-Rūḥāniyyūn* and *al-Muqarrabūn* (the bearers of the Throne of Glory) to the Prophet Muḥammad to offer their condolences on the death of his grandson, Ḥusain, and to ask the Prophet's permission to avenge Ḥusain's blood.

Abū Luhai'ah, who was with the convoy that took Ḥusain's head and the captives to Damascus, relates the following. On the way they stopped to rest and drank wine until they were drunk; Ḥusain's head was lying inside a coffin. That night there was thunder and lightning, and suddenly the gates of heaven opened and the prophets descended therefrom. First came Adam, Noah, Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Isḥāq, and Muḥammad, followed by the angels Isrāfīl, *al-Karūbiyyūn, al-Rūḥāniyyūn,* and *al-Muqarrabūn.* All of them jostled around the head, consoled the Prophet and asked his permission to avenge Ḥusain's

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blood (as noted above, the Prophet rejected the request because he himself would settle accounts with Ḥusain's killer on Resurrection Day).[21]

4. The Angels Called al-Rûḥâniyyûn

Al-Rûḥâniyyûn are close to the Throne of Glory, which they bear; they surround God.[22]

Al-Rûḥâniyyûn are described as advocates for the faithful. They ask God's forgiveness for the penitent. Some Qur'ân commentators hold that Jibrâ'îl and Mîkâ'îl are among them.[23] These angels are also called *Ḥamalat al-'Arsh* ("bearers of the Throne of Glory"). It is said of them: "And the angels will be on the sides thereof, and eight will uphold the Throne of their Lord, that day, above them. . .".[24] According to another tradition, only one of them bears the Throne of Glory; the distance between his ear and his shoulder is the distance of a march of seven centuries. His foot reaches down to the earth below (*al-arḍ al-suflâ*) and on his horn he carries the Throne.

Al-Rûḥâniyyûn are they who grant souls to living things. Each soul of each one of them turns into the soul of a living creature. Similarly they are in charge of the movement of the stars in the sky. *Al-Rûḥâniyyûn* praise and hallow the Creator by day and by night.[25]

In the *maqâtil* literature *al-Rûḥâniyyûn* are depicted as weeping over the killing of Ḥusain, together with the other angels. They also appear in a tradition transmitted by Salmân al-Fârisî (d. A.D. 656). He said, "*al-Rûḥâniyyûn* will all bow down in heaven on the day of Ḥusain's slaying and will not raise their head, to signify mourning over the death of Husain, until an angel calls out between heaven and earth and commands them to lift their head."[26]

5. Other Angels

Apart from the angels noted above, who are named in the *maqâtil* literature, others appear without mention of their

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names and function. These angels grieve over the killing of Ḥusain; they are destined to weep on Resurrection Day together with Fâṭimah, when she sees her son Ḥusain headless. There is a tradition transmitted by Ka'b al-Aḥbâr (d. A.D. 652), who is reported to have said: "A large company of heavenly angels weep over the death of Ḥusain, and they will continue to weep for him until the End of Days."[27]

Yet another angel mentioned in the *maqâtil* literature is named. He is Fitris. When Ḥusain was born, God commanded the angel Jibrâ'îl to descend together with a thousand more angels onto an island in the sea, where the angel Fitris dwelt. He had been among the angels who bore the Throne of Glory. Once this angel deviated in God's mission; therefore his wings were broken and he was thrust out onto a desert island. There the angel Fitris had served God seven hundred years.

When Ḥusain was born, Jibrâ'îl told him of the blessing received by the Prophet Muḥammad, and that he too was to bless him in the name of the angels and in his own name. Fitris entreated: "O Jibrâ'îl, carry me with you; perchance Muḥammad will pray for me." Jibrâ'îl took Fitris up, and on their arrival he told the Prophet the story of the angel. The Prophet said to him, "Anoint yourself for the newborn". Fitris anointed himself for the baby. His wings healed and flew up heavenward.[28]

C. The Motif of Prior Knowledge

The Shî'ite tradition relates that Ḥusain knew in advance of his death at the battle of Karbala. So when the angels, riding on horses from those of Paradise and holding spears in their hands, appeared to him on his way to Iraq and offered him aid in his war against the Umayyads, he refused their offer. Ḥusain would not accept the angels' help because he knew for certain that his fate was sealed, and nothing could avert what was to happen.

Moreover, the angels themselves knew of Ḥusain's death in advance.

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We have seen that the band of angels appeared before the Prophet together with Jibrâ'îl to congratulate him and to bless him on the birth of his grandson Ḥusain.[29] (According to another tradition, this took place when Ḥusain was one year old.) They also informed the Prophet of the slaying of his grandson Ḥusain when he was grown, and expressed their condolences for this. It is related that twelve angels appeared before the Prophet in various forms, one as a lion, another as an ox, a third as a crocodile, a fourth as a man, and so on. The faces of all of them were red (*muḥmarrah wujûhuhum*), their eyes brimmed with tears of sorrow at the death destined for Ḥusain. They spread their wings and said to Prophet Muḥammad: "O Muḥammad, a calamity will befall you regarding your grandson Ḥusain ibn Fâṭimah, a calamity similar to that of Abel at the hand of his brother Cain. And He, Ḥusain, will attack his slayers." Afterwards all the ministering angels appeared before the Prophet and together uttered their consolation for the coming death of his grandson Ḥusain.[30]

At that time not a single angel remained in heaven. All hovered over the Prophet's head, blessing him, and yet consoling him for the death of his grandson. They even showed him the dust of the earth on which he was to be killed. The Prophet responded, saying: "O God, may ruin be the lot of whomever would desist from succouring Ḥusain."[31]

Yet another tradition has it that the angel of the seas spread his wings over the seas and cried out aloud: "O denizens of the deep, don the attire of sadness and grief, for the chick of God's Messenger is slain." The angel took up a handful of the earth of Karbala, the place where Ḥusain was destined to be killed, and flew with it heavenward. The angels smelled the earth and remembered the odour, and all the angels cursed Ḥusain's slayers and their accomplices.[32]

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D. The Angels' Mourning Over the Death of Ḥusain

1. The Angels Visit Ḥusain's Grave

After Ḥusain's death the angels surrounded his grave, and they continue to do so daily; the grave is never devoid of angels. It is told that each day seventy thousand angels go to Husain's grave, their hair dishevelled and unkempt, their faces gray as dust, as a sign of mourning over the killing of Ḥusain.

Many versions of the visit of the angels to Ḥusain's grave exist. One is that each and every angel received permission to visit the grave. Before the visit the angels gather around the Ka'bah throughout the night, and when dawn breaks they visit the grave of the Prophet and bless it; thence they turn to Ḥusain's grave, and bless it. They return to heaven before sunrise.

There are daytime angels and nighttime angels. The daytime angels encircle the Ka'bah by day, and go to visit the graves of the prophets every evening at twilight. They bless the grave of the Prophet Muḥammad, the grave of 'Alî, Commander of the Faithful, and the grave of Ḥusain. At sunset they ascend to heaven. The nighttime angels (and *al-Ḥafaẓah*, the angels who record the deeds of mortals) visit the graves by night. They shake the hands of the permanent angels at the grave and of visitors to Ḥusain's grave, hover over them with their wings, and bless them.

The permanent angels of the grave are four hundred in number. They lament the grave day by day, from dawn to dusk, and never leave it even at night. These are the angels who arrived at Karbala in A.D. 680, on 'Âshûrâ' Day, to aid Ḥusain in his war against the Umayyads, and found that he was already slain. Because they missed the chance to help Ḥusain, God commanded them to weep over his grave. Their function is to receive the visitors to the grave and to be of assistance to them until Ḥusain is restored to life.[33]

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2. The Reward of the Visitor to Ḥusain's Grave

Ḥusain's grave is surrounded by angels who eulogise him day and night. The prayers of these angels are worth a thousand prayers of mortals, and the entire reward for the angels' prayers is granted to the human beings who visit the grave. Each person who visits the grave is ringed and protected by angels until he returns to his home. The angels pray to God to deal beneficently with these visitors, and they safeguard them against Satan.

The permanent angels of the grave record the names of the visitors, the names of their forefathers, of their family members, and their places of residence. They accompany them on their arrival and departure. When one who has visited the grave falls sick angels visit him at his home, and at his death they are present at the funeral.[34]

If fear overcomes a visitor to Ḥusain's grave the angels attend him and give him courage. They even welcome him with the message: "Do not be alarmed and do not fear; this day is the day of your victory."[35]

A further connection between the angels and the visitors to Ḥusain's grave exists through the immersion in the waters of the River Euphrates. This water is deemed holy, and any visitor must be purified in it before performing the *ziyârah* (ascent to the grave). The worldly river is parallel to the heavenly Euphrates, whose place is in Paradise. The angels too are in Paradise. They visit the worldly Euphrates daily, and sprinkle it with water from the heavenly river. Thus the taste of the Euphrates of the world becomes like that of the Euphrates of heaven. Furthermore, the angels have set in the worldly river two pipes, through which water from the heavenly river flows into it. So the water of the river Euphrates becomes mingled with the water of Paradise, and all who dip into it gain a taste of Paradise.

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Conclusion

The angel as God's messenger and executor is known in all the monotheistic religions, and he is ever-present in Islam. The angels in the Islamic tradition serve in a variety of roles. They are God's emissaries, and carry out his commands at a speed greater than the speed of light. They are appointed over the heavenly bodies and the souls of the righteous. They possess immense knowledge and sublime qualities.

The best known angels are Jibrâ'îl (Gabriel), said to have revealed the principles of the law to Muḥammad; Mîkâ'îl (Michael), possessor of the frightful visage and close to the Throne of Glory; and Isrâfîl, whose feet touch the earth and whose head reaches the Throne of Glory. He will sound the trumpet on Judgement Day to herald the resurrection of the dead.

The Islamic tradition recognises many other angels, who constitute the celestial retinue. Examples are the angels of the seven firmaments, who praise and revere God, *al-Rûḥâniyyûn*, who encircle God and bear the Throne of Glory; and finally the angel 'Izrâ'îl, the angel of death.

In the Shî'ite *maqâtil* literature the angels often appear in connection with the heroic death of Ḥusain ibn 'Alî. The angels knew of the coming death in advance; they eulogised him and consoled his grandfather the Prophet Muḥammad. Angels guard his grave and protect visitors to it, and also pray to God to deal kindly with these visitors. Furthermore, each day seventy thousand angels go up to Ḥusain's grave, their hair dishevelled and unkempt and their faces gray as sackcloth. They weep and grieve over the slaying of Ḥusain.

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ENDNOTES

(1) Kings, 22:19.

(2) 2 Samuel, 4: 16-17.

(3) Qur'ân, XXXV:1, English translation by Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'ân* (New York, 2000), p. 427.

(4) Maḥmûd Salîm al-Ḥût, *Fî Ṭarîq al-Mithûlûjiyâ 'ind al-'Arab*, Dâr al-Nahâr Li al-Nashr, 3rd ed. (Beirut, 1983), p. 202.

(5) Qur'ân, LXXIV:31, English translation by Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'ân*, p. 573.

(6) Jalâl al-Dîn al-Suyûṭî, *al-Ḥadâ'iq fî Akhbâr al-Malâ'ik* (Dâr Miṣr li 'l-Ta'lîf, Cairo, n.d.), p. 18.

(7) On motifs in the Shî'ite *maqâtil* literature, see chapter 4 of my research study, Khalid Sindawi, "The *Maqâtil* in Shî'ite Literature" (Hebrew), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2000, pp. 150-240.

(8) See the survey by Aliza Schnitzer of the appellations of Jibrâ'îl in the Qur'ân in her essay, "The Connection between the Qur'ân and the Muslim Tradition on the Question of the Revelation to Muhammad," MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1994, p. 41 ff.

(9) For a wide-ranging review of the appearances of Jibrâ'îl in the Qur'ân, see J. Pedersen, "Djabra'îl", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), pp. 362-364.

(10) Abu'l-Qâsim Sulaimân ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarânî, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, ed. Ḥamdî 'Abd al-Ḥamîd al-Salafî (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taimiyyah, 1976), 11:112, no. 231.

(11) Abû Mikhnaf Lût ibn Yaḥyâ, *Maqtal al-Ḥusain*, ed. 'Umar Abû al-Naṣr (Beirut, 1971), p. 115. See also Abu 'l-Mu'ayyad al-Muwaffaq ibn Aḥmad al-Bakrî al-Ḥanafî al-Khawârizmî, *Maqtal al-Ḥusain* (Najaf: Maṭba'at al-Zahrâ', 1367/1948), pp. 95, 127. See

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also Najm al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Ja'far Abu 'l-Baqâ' Hibat-Allâh al-Ḥillî, *Muthîr al-Aḥzân wa Munîr Subul al-Ashjân* (Tehran, 1317/1899), p. 5.

(12) Al-Khawârizmî, *Maqtal*, p. 88. See also Ibn Namâ, *Muthîr*, p. 56. See also Radiyy al-Dîn 'Alî ibn Mûsâ ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf 'alâ Qatlâ al-Tufûf* (Najaf: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaidariyyah, n.d.), p. 10. In the *Maqtal* of Abû Mikhnaf, Jibrâ'îl informs the Prophet of the future slaying of his grandson Ḥusain on the day he came to bless him on the birth, and not a year later, as told in the three other *maqâtil*.

(13) Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 127. See also al-Khawârizmî, *Maqtal*, p. 88; Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf*, p. 98.

(14) "An Arabicized word from the Greek. The Catholicos, the Primate of the Christians in the Land of Islam, [residing] in the [chief] city of Islam. Under him is the patriarch of Antioch, then under him the metropolitan, under whom is the bishop in every province: then the priest the deacon". Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Librairie du Liban (Beirut, 1865), 2:369, entry "Jâthîlîq".

(15) Al-Ḥût, *Fî Ṭarîq al-Mithulugyâ*, p. 205.

(16) Furyâl 'Ulwân, *'Âlam al-Malâ'ikah min Khilâl al-Qur'ân wa 'l-Aḥâdîth al-Sharîfah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr al-Lubnânî, 1st ed., 1992), p. 67.

(17) Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf*, p. 98. See also al-Khawârizmî, *Maqtal*, p. 88.

(18) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imâm Aḥmad* (Beirut: Dâr Sadir, n.d.), 1:147. See also al-Ṭabarânî, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, 1:195, no. 520. See also Abû 'Abd-Allâh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-Allâh al-Ḥâkim al-Nîsâbûrî, *al-Mustadrak* (Beirut, n.d.), 3:622.

(19) Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Wâqid al-Wâqidî, *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*, ed. Marsin Johns (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Âlamî li 'l-Maṭbû'ât, 3rd ed.), 1:57. For other traditions, see Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *al-*

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Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ (Beirut: Dâr Ṣâdir, n.d.), 3:175-176. See also Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 1:147.

(20) Abu 'l-Shaikh al-Iṣfahânî Abû Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-Allâh ibn Ja'far ibn Ḥayyân, *Kitâb al-'Aẓamah*, ed. Riḍâ'-Allâh ibn Muḥammad (Riyad, 1408/1988), 3:822, no. 10376; 3:810, no. 3-378.

(21) Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf*, p. 98. See also al-Khawârizmî, *Maqtal*, p. 88.

(22) Qur'ân, IV:172.

(23) Qur'ân, XL:7-9.

(24) Qur'ân, LXIX:17, English translation by Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'ân*, p. 562.

(25) Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadîd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balâghah*, ed. Muḥammad Abû al-Faḍl Ibrâhîm (Beirut: Dâr al-Jîl, 1st ed. 1407/1987), 1:96.

(26) Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf*, pp. 115, 171.

(27) *Ibid.*, p. 789. See also Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, p. 135; al-Khawârizmî, *Maqtal*, pp. 133, 171. See also Abu 'l-Qâsim Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Qulawaihî, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusain al-Amînî al-Tabrîzî (Najaf, 1356/1937), p. 83.

(28) Ibn Qulawaihî, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, p. 66.

(29) Ibn Ṭâwûs, *Maqtal*, p. 3. See also Ibn Namâ, *Muthîr*, p. 5.

(30) Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf*, p. 10. See also Ibn Namâ, *Muthîr*, p. 5.

(31) Ibn Ṭâwûs, *al-Lahûf*, p. 10.

(32) Muḥammad Bâqir ibn Muḥammad Taqî al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafâ', 1983), 45:44.

(33) Ibn Qulawaihi, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, pp. 11, 110.

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(34) *Ibid.*, p. 113.

(35) Al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr*, 45:98.

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HOLY EARTH: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAND OF KARBALA FOR THE SHÎ'AH

KHALID AHMAD SINDAWI

THE article shows the importance of the land of Karbala, the place where Husain ibn 'Alî, the Prophet's grandson, was killed in 680 A.C. It describes its sanctity and the blessing inherent in it. The blood of the slain Husain, which mingled with the earth, made this land holy for the Shî'ites, and they attribute many qualities and virtues to it.

The Shî'ites maintain that the land of Karbala had always been sacred, and that God chose it as his most select ground. There, Noah and his family were saved from the Flood, and many miracles were wrought at that place. Muhammad, the last of the prophets, heard from the angel Gabriel that his grandson would be killed at Karbala, and the angel indeed presented the Prophet with a handful of its soil.

Immediately following Husain's death the Shî'ites treated the land of Karbala as a place entirely of pain and sorrow; later their attitude changed, and they began to attribute to it good qualities and sanctity. Many traditions that accumulated ascribe holiness to the land of Karbala and prefer it to any other place on earth.[1]

Praises of Holy Earth among the Nations

Treating a certain tract of land as a holy place, and its earth as miracle-working, is known among the nations of the world. The scholar Rafael Patai, who studied customs and beliefs all over the world, wrote: "The belief is widespread among many peoples that direct physical contact between a person and the ground has a good effect on the person's fertility, or his powers in general, or that such contact is likely to cure illnesses. . . ."[2]

After describing various customs associated with this belief, Patai goes on: Clearly, the purpose of these customs is to

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receive strength from the ground, to draw the strength of the ground into the sick person's body and to assure him cure and recovery in this manner.

Among the fallahs of Palestine kissing the ground is an expression of thanks to Allah. . . .[3]

Kissing the ground is a common practice also in beseeching protection and guardianship. Contact with the earth may also defend a person from the destructive powers of nature, such as lightning and thunder, and afford him profit from his labour. And if contact with any ground has this effect, how much more has the contact with holy places, or places sanctified specially for that purpose. "The ground of special places has a particular remedial power, according to the popular belief. The Romans of antiquity believed that the Taurean peninsula in the state of Parasini had a variety of soil that cured every wound".[4]

The Slavic peoples believed that a certain ground was good for remedying barrenness and imparting fertility; the Persians cured sick people with the soil of certain places. Rubbing the body with it was taken to symbolise its revitalisation. Jews consider all the ground of the land of Israel holy, the soil of the tombs of saintly men in particular. The idea appears in the Talmud *aggadot* that contact with soil, especially soil of the homeland, restores a person's strength and protect him from harmful elements. Such contact may also give a person unusual powers, and even make him immune from magic spells.

In the Diaspora the Jews customarily carried with them a small bag containing a handful of soil of the land of Israel, which served as an amulet against illnesses and afflictions. This soil was deemed holy, and ensured blessing to him who carried it.[5] The Muslims were accustomed to taking clean earth with them for *tayammum*, regardless of where it was from. This was especially important on journeys, when the traveller came into contact with non-Muslims, and he had to be meticulous about purity. The notion was that the soil was a source of purity and cleanliness, and that a bag of clean earth should al-

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ways be within reach. Some took a clod of earth with them on which to pray. Such a one was Masrûq ibn al-Ajda' (d. 683 A.C.).[6] As stated, if any earth was so regarded, how much more the earth of a holy tomb. Every people has a certain tract of land that it prefers to all other places and whose soil it hallows. For the Shî'ite Muslims this is the land of Karbala. Carrying a small quantity of it imparts strength to the body of the faithful, and in this way it ensures fertility, recovery from illness, absolution, and blessing of various kinds.

Praises of the Soil of Ḥusain's Grave in the Land of Karbala

(i) *The importance and sanctity of the place.* After Ḥusain's slaying and burial at Karbala, the status of that place rose in the eyes of the Shî'ites. They ascribe sanctity to its soil and prefer it to all other places. A tradition* holds that God created the land of Karbala before he created the Ka'bah, and hallowed and blessed it. This has been holy ground since creation; the land is most preferable to God, and in the fullness of time it will become the land of Paradise, where God will install his saints. Some say that the bodies of the saints and the prophets are buried in that land.

At Karbala God spoke to Noah, and there Noah and his family were saved from the Flood. There too God spoke with Mûsâ ibn 'Imrân (Moses). The place where Ḥusain is buried is considered the best of all terrain all over the world. Another tradition has it that the importance and qualities of Karbala are in second place, after the Ka'bah, Madinah, and the temple in Jerusalem.[7]

The prophets visit Husain's grave at Karbala and eulogise him, and also hold gatherings to mourn him there. One mourner was the Prophet Noah; so affected was he by grief, sorrow, and weeping (*muta'aththiran bi'l-ḥuzn wa'l-bukâ*), and so much did he lament over Ḥusain and praise him, that Noah

* The word tradition/traditions also refers to the saying of the twelve Shî'ite *Imâms*.

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received that name (the Arabic word *nûḥ* means weeping and lament).[8]

The Shî'ites, then, ascribe great importance and honour to the land of Karbala. They believe that the soil of the place was presented by God to his messenger Muḥammad as a very precious gift. God sent angels as envoys to give the Prophet Muḥammad a handful of earth from the place where his grandson Ḥusain was to be slain. This earth is therefore worthy of the honour invested in it by God.

The Shî'ites kiss this soil, following the custom of the Prophet Muḥammad. And as he kept the handful of earth from this place and gave it to his wife 'Umm Salamah (Hind bint Suhail) (d. 681 A.C.), who kept it in a jar, so do they keep the soil from Ḥusain's grave. They smell it, as the Prophet smelled the blood of his slain grandson; they shed trears over it, as the Prophet wept when he learned that his beloved grandson was to be killed at that place.[9]

The soil of Ḥusain's grave is considered blessed, as we shall see below. The *Îmân* expressed this well: "The ground of Ḥusain's grave in the land of Karbala is the purest place on earth, the most holy". Accordingly, infants are blessed there; it is laid upon the eyes and passed over all parts of the body; people are cured by it and beg forgiveness in its name. They kiss it and even prostrate themselves before it.[10]

(ii) *Praises of prostration on the ground of Karbala.* It is related from the sixth Imâm Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq (d. 765 A.C.) that prostration on the ground of Karbala brings about the overcoming of the seven obstacles and illumination of the face of the globe. What are the seven obstacles? Some interpret them as seven traits all beginning with the Arabic letter 'ḥ': *ḥamâqah,* stupidity; *ḥirṣ,* greed; *ḥasad,* envy; *ḥiqd,* hatred; *ḥiddah,* anger; *ḥubb al-dunyâ,* love of this world; *ḥirmân,* depriving others.

Moreover, anyone desiring protection at Ḥusain's grave receives it, because this area is considered holy (*ḥaram*) no less

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than the Ka'bah, and Karbala is the purest place, whose sanctity is the greatest and arises from the depths of Paradise.[11]

A slightly different tradition speaks of seven masks, which are abominations that conceal the soul and prevent it from receiving the light of truth. They are:

al-ḥiqd, hatred
al-ḥasad, envy
al-ḥirṣ, greed
al-ḥiddah, anger
al-ḥamâqah, stupidity
al-ḥîlah, trickery
al-ḥaqârah, baseness.[12]

By contrast, every worshipper who lies prostrate on the soil of Karbala, an act which is a kind of request of commendation on the part of the favored ones, tears off the seven masks and replaces them with seven graces, which likewise begin with the letter 'ḥ':

al-ḥikmah, wisdom
al-ḥazm, ingenuity, initiative
al-ḥilm, composure, serenity
al-ḥanân, mercy
al-ḥaṣâfah, insight, understanding, commonsense
al-ḥayâ, modesty, humility
al-ḥubb, love.[13]

The Shî'ites base the custom of prostration on the grave on a tradition from the Prophet Muḥammad, who said, "The ground has become for me a mosque and a pure place". The tradition of prostration, like lowering oneself onto the soil, expresses submission and obeisance before God. What can be better than the soil of Ḥusain's grave, which is the cleanest, the best, and the most holy? This soil derives from the pure red silt carried by the river Euphrates from the heights of the mountains and from the alluvium of the riverbeds. The Shî'ites make panels of various sizes out of this silt, which serve them for prostration.[14]

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The use of these panels began in the second half of the third century of the Hijrah, at the time of the twelfth *Imâm*, who went into occultation at Sâmarra (874 A.C.).[15]

(iii) *Qualities of the soil of the grave and the benefit inherent in it.* The custom of sanctifying the soil is an early Islamic one, going back to the time of the Prophet: sanctification of the soil of the graves of martyrs, of the Prophet's grave, and of the graves of certain of his Companions. That such soil had curative powers was a common belief among the first Muslims. The custom began to appear in the third year of the Hijrah, after the battle of Uḥud (625 A.C.) following the fall of Ḥamzah (called Master of the Martyrs). It was then that people began taking soil from his grave as a remedy, and also to be blessed by it.

The soil of the graves of certain of the Prophet's Companions is also deemed holy. One of these is Ṣuhaib ibn Sinân al-Rûmî (d. 659 A.C.).

The first to pray over the soil of Ḥusain's grave was the fourth Imâm, 'Alî ibn al-Ḥusain (d. 712 A.C.). After burying his father's body. 'Alî took a handful of soil from the grave, placed it in a piece of cloth, and tied it. Thereafter he made a prayer carpet of it, and also a string of beads that he coiled around his hand. When 'Alî returned with his family from Damascus to Madinah he started blessing himself and prostrating himself over the handful of soil. The soil served him for curing ill persons in his family also. This was the start of the custom, which gradually became widespread among the 'Alawis and their supporters and followers.

'Alî's son, the fifth Imâm Muḥammad al-Bâqir (d. 732 A.C.), emulated his father and even went further. He urged his friends to prostrate themselves on Ḥusainî soil and also to make strings of beads out of it, and to relate the qualities of the earth of Karbala and the blessings inherent in it.

At the time of the sixth Imâm, Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq, the custom became still more prevalent. In this period the number of

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Shî'ites increased and their status gained strength. Al-Ṣâdiq himself lauded the qualities and holiness of the earth of Karbala for the Shî'ites. Al-Tûsî (d. 1067 A.C.), in his book *Miṣbâḥ al-Mutajâhid*, describes the custom thus:

> Abû 'Abd-Allâh al-Sâdiq would spread out a cloth made of yellow silk, and within it was soil from Ḥusain's grave. Then he would sprinkle some of this soil on his prayer carpet, and prostrate himself upon it. He would say, "Prostration on the soil of Ḥusain removes the seven sins."[16]

The other Imâms, the descendants of al-Sâdiq, continued this custom, and influenced the feelings of the believers, persuading them to fall on the soil of Ḥusain. In their traditions they also specified the reward to be won by one who prostrated himself on the ground of Karbala and the blessing inherent therein. From then until now the Shî'ites have been obliged to perform this prostration.

The soil in question is divided into two kinds: Husainî soil and the soil of Karbala, or Karbalai. The Ḥusainî soil is taken from the grave (today it is no longer accessible because the grave is covered over with a marble structure). It has special qualities, as detailed below. The Karbala soil is taken from the ground of Karbala, and its praises are legion.

a) Remedial properties:[17] Whoever eats of the Ḥusainî soil an amount the size of a chickpea will be cured of his or her malady. The cure may well come about also by using the soil as ointment or simply by carrying it.

b) Whoever carries Ḥusainî soil will be safe from all evil.

c) Insertion of a little Ḥusainî soil in one's merchandise increases its value.

d) A barren woman who takes this soil will conceive; a tree that does not bear fruit will give fruit.

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e) A car, ship or airplane carrying some Husainî soil will be safe from accident, sinking or disintegrating in the air.

f) A mentally ill person who has some of this soil placed on his head will be cured of his madness; an epileptic will become healthy; a prisoner sprinkled with some soil will be freed of his imprisonment.

g) The dead can also derive benefit from the Ḥusainî soil. A little of it is to be mixed with perfumes and placed in the grave; this will protect the dead person from punishment after death and from the angels Munkar and Nakîr, whose role is to interrogate the dead.

However, not everyone is permitted to take the soil; this too requires special qualities:

h) Anyone taking Ḥusainî soil must be pure; he must turn his face towards Makkah; he must ask of Husain himself permission to take some soil from his grave; he must be justly worthy of this soil.[18]

The soil is not taken from the grave itself because a large marble structure is built over it. But the entire area surrounding the grave is considered to possess holy soil. In former times, before the structure was built, people took soil from the grave itself, especially the part under which the head lies.

It is related that he caliph Hârûn al-Rashîd brought Mûsâ ibn 'Îsâ al-Hâshimî (d. 799 A.C.) from Kufa to Baghdad. Mûsâ was sitting surrounded by his friends at a banquet in the caliph's palace, and the talk turned to Husain. Mûsâ said, "Some of the extreme Shî'ites [al-Râfaḍah - the Râfiḍite sect] overdo their praises of Ḥusain, so much so that they make the soil of his grave a panacea for their ailments". One of the Hâshimîs present retorted, " I was ill with a very severe disease, and I did not recover from it until I had taken some of Ḥusain's soil". Mûsâ asked, "Do you have a bit of it left over?" The other said that he had, and he sent a servant to fetch it. Mûsâ took the soil, and to show his scorn and derision he shoved it up his

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rectum. Suddenly he began screaming, "fire, fire!" The soil had burst into flames inside his belly.[19]

(iv) *The Ḥusainî string of beads.* It is worth a person's while to carry with him a string of beads made out of soil from Ḥusain's grave. The beads are an amulet, which safeguards the person from all evil and grants him an everlasting reward. The beads serve as praise for the Creator and as a token of His attributes, ninety-nine in number.

It is told of Fâṭimah, daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad, that her string of beads was made of woollen thread with knots, which she would wind around her hand and praise God, saying "Allâhu Akbar," until Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was killed. Thereafter she began using soil from his grave for making beads. Many used these strings of beads that she fashioned, and when Ḥusain ibn 'Alî was killed they stopped using soil from Ḥamzah's grave and used the soil of Ḥusain instead for making beads.

Here is a tradition from the last Imâm. He said, "Whoever forgets to mention the name of God, and has on his hand a string of beads made from the soil of Ḥusain's grave, will be forgiven by God, who will grant him his deserts."

There is also a tradition from the Imâm Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq. He said, "The string of beads from Ḥusain's grave praises God by its own powers and winds itself around the hand of whoever holds it." He also said, "Whoever winds one string of beads made from the soil of Ḥusain's grave and begs forgiveness once is forgiven by God seventy times. And whoever praises God with this string of beads once will be rewarded by God with 400 rewards, have 400 sins wiped off, have 400 wishes fulfilled, and will rise 400 grades in Paradise."[20]

Furthermore, "Whoever carries a Ḥusainî string of beads and winds it around his hand and recites the special saying for it (*al-du'â' al-makhṣûṣ*), will get his deserts from God even if he has forgotten to praise him and only held the string of beads".[21]

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Summary

The custom of sanctifying ground was widespread among the Muslims from the beginning of Islam; not surprisingly, therefore, the soil from the grave of Ḥusain, martyred at Karbala, is considered holy. It is also thought the most clean, the most precious, and the most pure anywhere on earth.[22]

Not only the soil of the grave but also the entire land of Karbala is praised and hallowed. The chief reasons for this are the following. This land is the closest to the blessed God, and the most illuminated. This is the land of the grave of a saint, a revered leader who did not recoil from a hopeless battle, who did not hesitate to sacrifice his life and the lives of his family and dearest of all to him, in order to praise and adulate the Creator and to glorify His name, so that his word would stand forever.[23]

ENDNOTES

(1) For more on this subject see George Kanazi, "Karbalâ fi 'l-Adab al-Shî`î," *al-Kamil*, 1992, vol. 13, pp. 179-194. See also Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain al-`Alawî al-Shajarî, *Faḍl Ziyârat al-Ḥusain*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusainî (Maktabat `Âyatallâh al-Mar`ashî al-`Âmmah, Qumm, 1403 H), pp. 59, 67, 68, 73. See also Abu 'l-Qâsim Ja`far ibn Muḥammad ibn Qulawaihî, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, al-Maṭba`ah al-Murtaḍawiyyah, Naǰaf 1356/1937, pp. 63-66.

(2) Rafael Patai, *Man and Land, A Study of Customs, Art, and Folktales in Isreal and the Nations of the World* (Society for the Publication of Books of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1943), vol. 2, p. 103.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

(5) *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 113.

(6) http://www.al-islam.org/Beliefs/Practices/turba.htm, p. 1.

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(7) Kanazi, "Karbala. . ." pp. 179-194; Abu 'l-Qâsim Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Qulawaihî, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, pp. 268-269.

(8) Akhtab Khawârizmi, *Maqtal al-Ḥusain* (Maṭba'at al-Zahrâ', Najaf, 1367/1948), p. 17.

(9) 'Alî al-Aḥmadî, *al-Sujûd 'ala 'l-'Arḍ* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 137-142.

(10) *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144. See also 'Abd al-Ḥusain Ibrâhîm al-'Âmilî, *al-Mufîd fî Dhikrâ al-Sibṭ al-Shahîd* (Manshûrât Dâr wa Maktabat al-Hilâl, 3rd ed. Beirut, 1984), pp. 10-11.

(11) Muḥammad Ṣâliḥ al-Baḥrânî, *al-Manâbî' al-Nawirâ' fî Waqâ'i' 'Âshûrâ'* (Manshûrât Mu'assasat al-'Alâmâ li'l-Matbû'ât, 1st ed. Beirut, 1993), pp. 40-42.

(12) Al-Ḥusain Âl Kâshif al-Ghiṭâ', *al-Arḍ wa'l-Turbah al-Ḥusainiyyah* (al-Majma' al-'Ilmî li-Ahl al-Bait, Qumm, 1995), p. 39.

(13) *Ibid.*

(14) Al-Baḥrânî, *al-Manâbi' al-Nawirâ' fî Waqâ'i' 'Âshûrâ'*, pp. 40-42.

(15) His name was Muḥammad, and he was known as Abu al-Qasim. At the beginning of his incumbency his name was kept secret. He went into occultation in 874 A.C. in a cave under the cellar of his house in the city of Samarra, about 100 km north of Baghdad. He was never seen again. For details, see Etan Kohlberg, *The Shî'a, the Sect of 'Alî, in Protest and Revolution in Shî'i Islam*, ed. Martin Kramer (Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, 1986), p. 24.

(16) Al-Baḥrânî, *al-Manâbi' al-Nawirâ' fî Waqâ'i' 'Âshûrâ'*, pp. 116-117.

(17) Al-Shajarî, *Fadl Ziyârat al-Ḥusain*, p. 89. See also Ibn Qulawaihî, *Kâmil al-Ziyârât*, pp. 91-93; 'Alî ibn Mûsâ ibn Tâwûs, *Miṣbâḥ al-Zâ'ir* (ed. Mu'assasat Ahl al-Bait 'Alaihim al-Salâm li-Ihyâ' al-Turâth, 1st ed. Qumm, 1417 H), pp. 256-260; Hâshim al-Nâjî al-Mûsawî al-Jazâ'irî, *Âthâr wa Barakât Sayyid al-Shuhadâ' fî Dâr al-Dunyâ'* (Maṭba'at Dânish, 1st ed., Qumm, 1416 H), pp. 48-51.

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(18) Muḥammad Bâqir ibn Muḥammad Taqî al-Majlisî, *Biḥâr al-Anwâr* (Mu`assasat al-Wafâ', 2nd ed., Beirut, 1983), 43:36-38.

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 38.

(20) `Abbâs al-Qummî, *Mafâtîḥ al-Jinân* (Dâr al-Mujtabâ`, 1st ed., Beirut, 1995), p. 630.

(21) Âl Kâshif al-Ghiṭâ', *al-Ard wa'l-Turbah al-Husainiyyah*, p. 38. See also Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu`mân al-Ḥârith, surnamed al-Shaikh al-Mufîd, *Kitâb al-Mazâr* (Madrasat al-Imâm al-Mahdî `Alaihi al-Salâm, 1st ed., Qumm, 1409 H.) pp. 132-133.

(22) Âl Kâshif al-Ghiṭâ', *al-Ard wa'l-Turbah al-Husainiyyah*, p. 38. See also Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu`mân al-Ḥârith, surnamed al-Shaikh al-Mufîd, *Kitâb al-Mazâr*, pp. 132-133.

(23) http://www.al-islam.org/Beliefs/Practices/turba.htm, pp. 5-6.

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CHAPTER 1

The sanctity of Karbala in Shiite thought

KHALID SINDAWI

Karbalāʾ is located on the Ḥusayniyya River, a tributary of the Euphrates, south-west of Baghdad. It is one of Iraq's more ancient cities, and has had several names since the Arab conquest, among them al-Ghāḍiriyya, al-Ṭaff, al-Ḥāʾir, Mashhad al-Ḥusayn (Ḥusayn's Shrine) and al-Rawḍa al-Ḥusayniyya (Ḥusayn's Garden).[1] The name Karbalāʾ goes back to Babylonian times. According to scholarly opinion, it is derived from 'Kor Babil',[2] the meaning of which has been the subject of considerable debate.[3]

Karbalāʾ and the killing of Imam Ḥusayn

The city is not mentioned in Arab pre-Islamic sources, as stated by Honigmann[4] in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Yāqūt, in his *Muʿjam al-buldān*, notes that it is 'the place where al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī was killed'.[5] The fact that al-Ḥusayn was killed here was the source of the city's growing importance in Islamic thought in general, and among Shīʿites in

1 See al-Kilīdār ʿAbd al-Jawād, *Tārīkh Karbalāʾ wa-ḥāʾir al-Ḥusayn ʿalayhi al-salām*, Maṭbaʿat al-Nuʿmān, al-Najaf, 1967, p. 23.

2 See al-ʿÀmilī ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn, *al-Mufīd fī dhikrā al-sibṭ al-shahīd*, Muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, Beirut, 1969, p. 10; and al-Amīn Ḥasan, 'Karbalā'', *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-islāmiyya al-shīʿiyya*, Dār al-taʿāruf lil-maṭbūʿāt, Beirut, 1997, p. 354.

3 For more scholarly discussions of the name of Karbalāʾ, see George Kanazi, 'Karbalāʾ fī al-adab al-shīʿī', *al-Karmil-Abḥāth fī al-lugha wal-adab* 13 (1992), pp.179–81; cf. E. Honigmann, 'Karbala', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, IV (1978), p. 637.

4 Ibid.

5 Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabī, Beirut, 1979, IV, p. 445.

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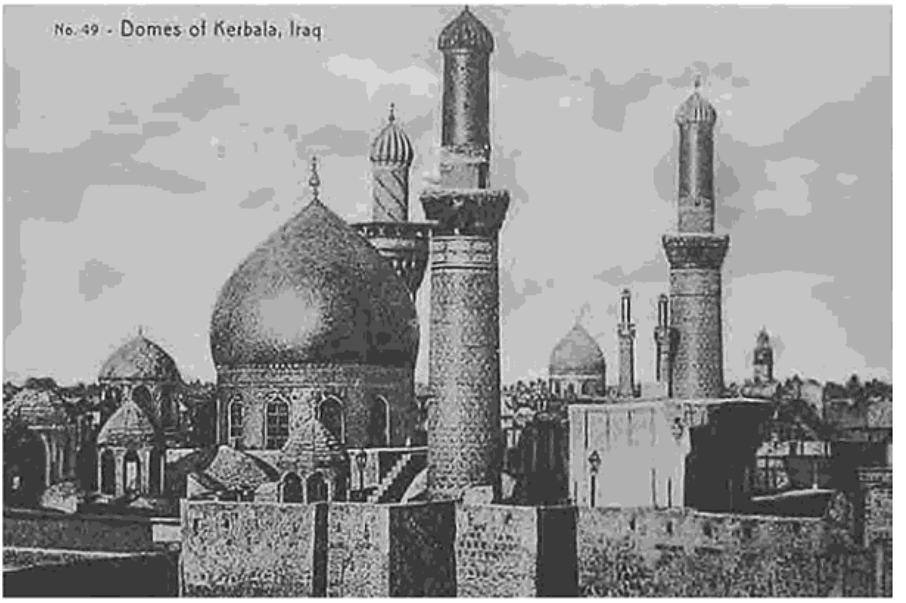

Figure 1 Old Postal Card showing Shrine of Imam Hoseyn at Karbalā'.

particular, as well as of its prominence in the elegiac literature dedicated to al-Ḥusayn throughout the ages.

The killing of Ḥusayn on the day of Ashura (10 October AH 61/680 CE) at the hands of the Umayyads was an important turning point in the evolution of Shiism[6] as a sectarian and political movement. The tragic circumstances surrounding his death, his firm commitment to his principles, and his courage in the face of his enemies were fundamental in making him a symbol of martyrdom and sacrifice for one's beliefs. His death also had a great influence on the development of Shīʿite literature. The circumstances of his death have been depicted in verse and prose; Shīʿites hold festivals of eulogy poetry dedicated to Ḥusayn, write books on his death and perform plays depicting his killing and the cruel treatment given to him and his followers. The works in question have been written in Arabic, Persian and other languages.[7]

Over the course of time, the figure of Ḥusayn has gradually taken on super-human qualities. His death is no longer perceived as the end result of a certain course of events and an unequal battle, but rather as a decree of fate, a decision made by God, who sent Gabriel to inform the Prophet;

6 The words 'Shiism' and 'Shīʿite' in this article refer to Twelver Shiism.

7 Kanazi, 1992, p. 182.

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the latter in turn told Fatima, ʿAlī and ultimately Ḥusayn himself, long before the actual event. Ḥusayn's torment was an unchangeable decree of fate, a means of purification; he had no choice but to drink of the cup of suffering in order to achieve eternal glory. Ḥusayn therefore became the ultimate martyr: he knew his fate beforehand and faced it bravely.[8]

Land of Karbalāʾ as grief (*karb*) and misfortune (*balāʾ*)

Shīʿite tradition has associated Ḥusayn's fate with the soil of Karbalāʾ. According to one tradition, the Prophet's wife Umm Salama (Hind bint Suhayl, d.681) said: 'I saw the Messenger of God stroking Ḥusayn's head and crying. I asked him,"Why are you crying?" He replied,"Gabriel just told me that this son of mine will be killed on the soil of a place called Karbalāʾ."' She said,'He then gave me a handful of red soil and said "This is soil from the place in which he will be killed; when it turns into blood you will know that he has been killed."'[9] According to another tradition, when he received the soil 'he smelled it and said"a smell of grief [karb] and misfortune [*balāʾ*]."'[10]

As narrated by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, he was on his way to Ṣiffīn when he passed by some colocynth trees near Karbalāʾ. He asked for the name of the place and was told that it was Karbalāʾ. He responded, 'Grief [*karb*] and misfortune [*balāʾ*]', and then descended and prayed next to a tree there. He then said, 'Here the best martyrs who are not Companions of the Prophet will be killed; they will enter Paradise without a reckoning.' He pointed to a spot there, and they placed a sign. This is where Ḥusayn

8 Ibid.

9 Al-Fayrūzabādī Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī, *Faḍāʾil al-khamsa min al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*, Maṭbaʿat al-Najaf, al-Najaf, 1383/1963, III, pp. 285–6. For more on this issue, on ʿAlī's foreknowledge and on the prophetic curses against al-Ḥusayn's killers, see, Ibn Qūlawayhi Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, al-Maṭbaʿa al-murtaḍawiyya, al-Najaf, 1356/1937, p. 59; Ibn Ṭāwūs Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, *al-Luhūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭufūf*, Dār al-ʿālam (Jahan) lil-nashr, Tehran, 1348/1929, pp. 15–27; Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar, *Muthīr al-aḥzān wa-munīr subul al-ashjān*, Madrasat al-imām al-Mahdī, Qumm, 3rd printing, 1406/1985, p. 6; and al-ʿÀmilī Muḥsin Amīn, *Iqnāʿ al-lāʾim*, Maṭbaʿat al-ʿirfān, Sidon, 1344/1925, pp. 31–41 on the Prophet's tears over al-Ḥusayn's death and Gabriel's revelation to the Prophet concerning al-Ḥusayn's death and his coming to his tomb. Al-ʿÀmilī collected these traditions and tales from older sources; see also al-Majlisī Muḥammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, Tehran, 1385/1965, 44:253.

10 Ibn Jaʿfar al-Haythamī, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-muḥriqa fī al-radd ʿalā ahl al-bidaʿ wal-zandaqa*, Maṭbaʿat al-qâhira, Cairo, 1966, 2nd printing, p. 191; and Kanazi, 'Karbalāʾ fī al-adab al-shīʿī', *al-Karmil-Abḥāth fī al-lugha wal-adab* 13 (1992).

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was killed. Ḥusayn,[11] too, asked when they reached Karbalāʾ: 'What is the name of this land?' They said, 'Karbalāʾ.' He answered: 'Grief [*karb*] and misfortune [*balāʾ*]'.[12]

Our interest in these traditions lies in the fact that the name Karbalāʾ was already construed as consisting of 'grief' and 'misfortune' at a very early time. In addition to the preceding accounts of ʿAlī and Ḥusayn, we find other reports relating that Shīʿite Imams of the second century ah also associated the name Karbalāʾ with grief and misfortune.[13] For example, the Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is reported as saying: 'What happened on Ashura burned our hearts and aroused our tears. The soil of Karbalāʾ has bequeathed us grief and misfortune. For what happened to Ḥusayn let us cry.'[14]

The eighth Imam, ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 818), is quoted as saying: 'The day of Ḥusayn's death wounded our eyelids, made our tears drop, humiliated our dear one on the soil of Karbalāʾ, and bequeathed us grief and misfortune until the Day of Completion. For what happened to Ḥusayn let us cry.'[15]

How the land of Karbalāʾ become sacred to the Shīʿites

We see that Karbalāʾ has from the earliest times been linked to the tragedy of Ḥusayn. It was thus natural and easy to derive the meanings of grief and misfortune from the name. It is also understandable that the first reaction to this tragedy was to make the place where Ḥusayn was killed a place that is cursed.

But Karbalāʾ is also the place where Ḥusayn was buried. Its soil is therefore sacred. This is not consistent with its association with grief, misfortune and being cursed. As a result, it was only natural that the attitude toward the place underwent a transformation, from being cursed to being blessed, honoured and sanctified. In Shīʿite thought it came to hold an extraordinarily exalted place, and its sanctity is reflected in numerous traditions. Proof of this is easily found; it suffices to read

11 Ibn Kathīr, *Istishhād al-Ḥusayn*, Maṭbaʿat al-madanī, Cairo, 1977, p. 126; see also, Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, Maktabat al-khānjī, Cairo, 1382/1962, p. 142; Ibn Ṭāwūs Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsa, *al-Malāḥim wal-fitan*, al-Maṭbaʿat al-ḥaydariyya, al-Najaf, 1365/1945, pp. 92–93; and al-Majlisī, 1385/1965, 44:253.

12 Ibn Kathīr, 1977, 66; and Kanazi, 1992.

13 Kanazi, 1992.

14 Al-Isfarāyīnī Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad, *Nūr al-ʿayn fī mashhad al-Ḥusayn*, no publisher, 1291/1874, p. 57.

15 Al-Ṣadūq Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayhi al-Qummī, *al-Àmilī*, al-Maṭbaʿa al-ḥaydariyya, al-Najaf, 1389/1969, p. 113; al-Kirmānī Muḥammad Karīm Khān, *Risālat al-maqtal*, Kirmān, no date, p. 182 and; al-Majlisī, 1385/1965, 44:284.

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Honigmann's survey of the history of Karbalāʾ, or what ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Kilīdār and ʿAbd al-Jawād al-Kilīdār wrote on this subject, to see that Karabalāʾ, and especially the area of al-Ḥusayn's shrine, has been built up by the city's Shīʿite pilgrims.[16]

Ibn Qūlawayhi (d. AH 367/977 CE) collected a great number of traditions concerning the soil of Karbalāʾ's sanctity and its exalted virtues, which surpass even those of Mecca. In one tradition the Prophet is reported to have said: 'My son will be buried in a land called Karbalāʾ, which is the place of the domed shrine of Islam in which God protected those who had been with Noah in the flood.' According to Ibn Qulawayh, 'al-Ghāḍiriyya [one of the names of Karbalāʾ] is the place in which God spoke to Moses son of Amram and where he sheltered Noah. It is God's most noble land, for were it not He would not have sheltered His saints and prophets there.' According to another tradition,'God may He be blessed and exalted created the land of Karbalāʾ twenty-four thousand years before he created the Kaaba. He sanctified and blessed it, so that it was sanctified and blessed even before God created Creation, and it will remain so until God will make it into the best land in Paradise and the preferred abode where God will lodge his saints in Paradise.'[17]

Perhaps the clearest expression of the importance of Karbalāʾ in Shīʿite thought is the following passage, written by ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-ʿÀmilī, on the way in which Karbalāʾ brings sanctity and grief together:

> Ibn Ṭāwūs and others relate … that the land of Karbalāʾ in antiquity was a place of pilgrimage for prophets and the pious. The prophets would come here in ancient times and perform funeral rites. Noah, peace be upon him, came and was so affected with grief and weeping that he was called Noah [*Nūḥ*] because he moaned [*nawāḥ*] and cried so much on this sacred soil. The same happened with Moses, Jesus and all the prophets … It is a land which no pious person has entered without being overcome with grief and weeping, in ancient and recent

16 See the entry 'Karbalāʾ' in the *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-islāmiyya*, 1997; and ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al- al-Kilīdār ʿAbd al-Jawād, *Tārīkh Karbalāʾ wa-ḥāʾir al-Ḥusayn*, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Radī, Qumm, 1418/1997), pp. 18–20.

17 Ibn Qūlawayhi Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, al-Maṭbaʿa al-murtaḍawiyya, al-Najaf, 1356/1937, pp. 268–9; see ibid., p. 271, on the modesty of the soil of Karbalāʾ, how it was compensated for its modesty by receiving the bodies of Ḥusayn and his companions, and how the soil of the Kaʿba was punished for its haughtiness by the giving of it to infidels and the ruining of its spring Zamzam with salt water; and ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Nafthat al-maṣdūr*, al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿilmiyya, Tabriz, 1344/1925, p. 12.

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> times. Does the soil of Karbalāʾ bear a secret except for Ḥusayn before he was killed there? Or was Ḥusayn himself the great secret known to the prophets so that they would come there and grieve there before Ḥusayn even existed? In fact, no historical evidence exists for any ancient secret in Karbalāʾ before the secret of Ḥusayn, may peace be unto him.[18]

This is an attempt by Shiism to imbue the ancients with Shīʿite traits, to make them serve as models and proof of the existence of Shiism and the Shīʿite doctrine at Karbalāʾ in antiquity, to demonstrate its legitimacy, to ascribe to it a millennia-old history, and to demonstrate the superiority of Shīʿites over their current enemies and oppressors.[19]

Another virtue attributed to the soil of Karbalāʾ is that it is a place preferred, sanctified and blessed by God, a safe refuge for Islam and for Shīʿite believers, a place more fit for worship than any other. Here, Mary gave birth to her son Jesus Christ and then returned to her own land.[20] It is also the place where God spoke to Moses and where He sheltered Noah.[21] Furthermore, according to Shīʿite writings, the soil of Karbalāʾ and Ḥusayn's tomb has the effect of calming the sea if some of it is thrown into the water, as if the sea feared its greatness and majesty.

Karbalāʾ has become an important sacred city, drawing numerous Shīʿites from all over the world. For centuries, millions of Muslim pilgrims have visited the various shrines in Iraq, especially Ḥusayn's tomb at Karbalāʾ. They come from all over the Arab and Muslim world to perform the prescribed pilgrimage rites, to pray and to ask God for His intercession. One of the most important factors in making Karbalāʾ a holy site and a Shīʿite religious centre of great cultural and social significance is the fact that Ḥusayn and several members of the Prophet's family who died with him are buried there. All of these have their own grand shrines

18 Al-ʿÀmilī ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīm, *al-Mufīd fī dhikrā al-sibṭ al-shahīd*, Manshūrāt muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, Beirut, 1389/1969, pp. 10–11; and Kanazi,1992.

19 For more details on this subject, see Etan Kohlberg, 'Some Shīʿī views on the antediluvian world', *Studia Islamica* vol.52 (1980), pp. 41–66.

20 It was said in the name of al-Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon him, that on God's words, 'And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place' (Q 19:22) he said: 'She left Damascus until she came to Karbalā', gave birth to him at the site of al-Ḥusayn's grave, and then returned that same night': al-Ḥurr al-ʿAmilī muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa,* Muʾassasat ʾāl al-Bayt, Qumm, 1988/1409, 14:417, ḥadīth no. 19725.

21 Al-Majlisī, 1385/1965, 98:108–109; cf. Sindawi, 2003, p. 75.

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and have contributed to making Karbalā' a pilgrimage site of religious and economic importance.[22]

Another factor that played a role in making Ḥusayn's shrine and Karbalā' sacred for Shī'ites is their belief in the efficacy of asking for the Imams' intercession, during their lives and also after their deaths, because the Imams are believed to have influence with God and the prophets. The belief in their efficacy and sanctity is reflected in many traditions and in the pilgrimages and vows taken in order to ask God to cure the supplicant, provide for his needs or to intercede on his behalf on the Day of Judgment.

The Shī'ite pilgrimages to various holy sites throughout Iraq, and especially Karbalā', take place at a number of specified seasons during the year. Karbalā' is a site that is visited several times each year, a factor that has contributed to turning it into a lively and bustling city, full of pilgrims from every corner of the globe.[23]

Besides serving as an act of covenant renewal between the believers and the Imam, visiting is also aimed at preserving the collective Shii memory and group identity, as distinguished from that of the Sunnis. Hence the efforts to turn Karbalā' and Ḥusayn's shrine to a focus of devotion for the Shiis, at times challenging the position of Mecca and the Kaaba. Indeed, at various points during Muslim history, and especially in times of strife between the Safavids and the Ottomans, the visitation of Karbalā' substituted for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Visitation was encouraged from an early period of Shii history, beginning with the Imams. Shii jurists and scholars also urged it in their works. The practice developed on a very massive scale following the establishment of Safavid Iran (1501) and the subsequent conversion of the bulk of Iranians to Shiism. With the collapse of the Safavid state in 1722, and the shift of the Shii academic centre from Isfahan to Karbalā' and later to Najaf in the mid eighteenth century, visitation become closely linked with the socioeconomic development of these cities and boosted the power of the Shii mujtahids vis-à-vis the Ottoman government in Iraq.

Visitation also reinforced the status of Karbalā' and Najaf focuses of devotion for Shiis following the Wahhabi attacks on the two cities early in the nineteenth century. It peaked in the nineteenth century, as the bulk of Iraq's tribes were converted to Shiism. The large scale of visitation

22 Nakash Yitzhah, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, pp. 163–4.

23 On the concept of pilgrimage to holy shrines in Twelver Shiism, see Sachedina Abdulaziz, 'Ziyāra', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. XI, 2002, pp. 533–4.

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of the shrine cities at that time may also be attributed to the relative improvement in Ottoman-Qajar relations after their last war of 1812–1823, and to the spread of beliefs among the laity that emphasized the rewards to be gained by its performance.[24]

The virtues of visiting Karbalāʾ for Shīʿites

A great many Shīʿite traditions have contributed markedly to enhancing the status of Karbalāʾ and Ḥusayn's shrine. According to some traditions, a visit to Ḥusayn's tomb ensures forgiveness of one's sins, entry into Paradise, escape from the fires of Hell and more.[25] For example, it is related that the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. AH 148 /765 CE), said, 'By God, if I had told you the virtues of visiting his shrine, you would have immediately abandoned the haj. No-one would have gone to Mecca. Woe unto you if you had known that God had chosen Karbalāʾ as a safe and blessed holy shrine before he chose Mecca.'

The afore mentioned tradition tries to establish the virtue of the pilgrimage to Karbalāʾ and Ḥusayn's shrine by comparing it to the sacred precinct in Mecca, which contains the Kaaba. That is the holiest spot for Sunnis, who visit it every year during the haj and *ʿumra* seasons.[26] The tradition claims that Ḥusayn's shrine in Karbalāʾ is superior to that of Mecca and the Kaaba, in that it had been chosen an undisclosed number of years earlier. The comparison between Ḥusayn's shrine and Karbalāʾ and Mecca and the Kaaba recurs in many Shīʿite sources, ancient and modern alike, which quote traditions confirming the superiority of the former over the latter.

It is related that the fourth Shīʿite Imam, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. AH 94/712 CE), known as al-Sajjād and Zayn al-ʿÀbidīn and al-Bakkāʾ, said:

> God chose Karbalāʾ as a blessed haven twenty-four thousand years before He created the soil of the Kaaba and chose it as a sacred precinct. When God will shake the earth and move it, it will as it is with its pure soil and be put in the best place in Paradise, to be the abode of none but prophets and messengers or, according to some, the resolute among the prophets. It shall shine among the gardens of the inhabitants of Paradise like a twinkling star shines among the stars

24 Yitzhah, 1994, pp. 301–2.

25 See al-Qummī ʿAbbās, *Nafas al-mahmūm fī muṣībat sayyidinā al-Ḥusayn al-mazlūm*, Dār al-maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ, Beirut, 1992, p. 485.

26 Sindawi, 2003, pp.76–7.

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For detailed study refer

Ḥusayn's Dirt: The Beginnings and Development of Šīʿī Ziyāra in the Early Islamic Period

By Parker

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PLEROMATIC DESCENT

Legends Concerning the Wedding of Fāṭima Al-Zahrāʿ As Reflected in Early Shīʿite Literature

Khalid Sindawi
Emek Yezreel

There are two good reasons for dedicating a paper to legends about Fāṭima's wedding in early Shīʿite[1] literature: the lack, to the best of our knowledge, of any previous scholarly treatments of this subject; and the existence of numerous Shīʿite traditions which deal with it.

The present study is based primarily on materials found in the following four sources:

1. *Dalāʾil al-imāma* by Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī al-Ṣaghīr (d. second half of the fourth, or beginning of the fifth century AH). Al-Ṭabarī, a prominent Shīʿite *faqīh* of the fourth century AH and a contemporary of the Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, was born in the city of Āmul in the province of Māzandarān. He heard traditions from many of al-Ṭūsī's teachers. The traditions which he transmitted are quoted in respected Shīʿite collections and are considered reliable. His *Dalāʾil al-imāma* contains stories of Shīʿite Imāms as well as traditions about the Prophet and his family, and also Imāms' sayings and sermons.

2. *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* by Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192), one of the most prominent Shīʿite learned men of his generation, respected also in Sunnī circles. His book contains biographies of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve Imāms.

3. *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Fattāl al-Nīshābūrī (d. 508/1114), also known as Ibn al-Fattāl or Ibn al-Fārisī. The author was killed by ʿAbd al-Razzāq, the *wazīr* of the Seljuk sultan Sanjar Ibn Malik-Shāh (d.1157). The book consists of two parts, biographies and traditions about the Prophet, Fāṭima and the twelve Imāms, and traditions about various religious topics such as burial, resurrection, marriage, the month of Ramaḍān and so on.

4. *Biḥār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1115/1698), who grew up in Iṣfahān and devoted his life to collecting Shīʿite traditions. In the year 1686 he was appointed "Shaykh of Islām" by the Ṣafawid ruler, a position which al-Majlisī used in order to enhance the status of Twelver Shīʿism. The book contains a wealth of information on numerous topics, including Shīʿite traditions, exegesis, jurisprudence, rhetoric, ethics and more. It is one of the largest collections of Shīʿite traditions, and

[1] Shīʿa and Shīʿite refer throughout this article to Imāmī (Twelver) Shīʿism.

contains materials which al-Majlisī took from a number of sources dating back to various historical periods, among them *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, *al-Kharā'ij wal-jarā'iḥ*, the above-mentioned *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* and others, which makes it possible to perform a comparison among traditions derived from a number of different sources.

In this paper we describe and analyse traditions concerning Fāṭima's heavenly and earthly marriage ceremony and attempt to discover the motivation behind the creation of the legends concerning this event

Preparatory remarks

ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[2] (d. 661 CE) married the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, whose epithet was al-Zahrā' (= "the radiant"),[3] in the city of al-Madīna.[4] Muslim scholars are not agreed on the date of the wedding; some claim that it took place during the first year after coming to al-Madīna, others put it in the second year AH,[5] and still others waver between the two opinions.[6] But whatever the date, ʿAlī's marriage to Fāṭima was an important event in his life. He never took another wife as long as Fāṭima lived, and thanks to her he became the Prophet's son-in-law and the father of the Prophet's descendants. This marriage thus played an important role in the history of Islām, and especially in the history of Shīʿism.

Sunnī and Shīʿite sources differ in reporting the circumstances of ʿAlī's marriage with Fāṭima. According to some Sunnī traditions both Abū Bakr and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb asked the Prophet for her hand in marriage, but the Prophet declined both proposals since his daughter was still too young, and eventually he betrothed her to ʿAlī.[7] According to one tradition the Prophet had already promised her to ʿAlī before Abū Bakr and ʿUmar presented themselves.[8]

According to Shīʿite sources ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf al-Zuhrī (d. 652 CE) also asked Fāṭima's father for her hand in marriage. As bridal money he offered one-hundred black, blue-eyed she-camels, all laden with Egyptian Qabāṭī (a kind of cloth inclining to fineness, thinness and whiteness) and ten-thousand dinars. According to this tradition, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān was present at the time and offered to give the same, pointing out that he, ʿUthmān, had embraced Islām before ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf. The Prophet, after hearing their offers was very angry at both. He took a handful of pebbles, dropped them over ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and said: "Do you want to impress me with your possessions?" Whereupon the pebbles turned into pearls, each of

[2] For details about him see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib", *EI²*, s.v.

[3] For more on her see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Fāṭima", *EI²*, s.v.

[4] Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 6:16.

[5] Ibn Abī Khuthayma, *al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, 1:88; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-umam wal-mulūk*, 2:15; al-Bustī, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya wa-akhbār al-khulafāʾ*, p. 152; al-Quḍāʿī, *al-inbāʿ bi-abnāʾ al-anbiyāʾ wa-tawārīkh al-khulafāʾ wa-wilāyāt al-umarāʾ*, p. 137; al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa wa-maʿrifat aḥwāl ṣāḥib al-sharīʿa*, 3:162.

[6] Al-Masʿūdī accepts first the one, then the other. For details see al-Masūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, 2, 290; al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbīh wal-ishrāf*, p. 218.

[7] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba*, 2:614; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Qaṣīda al-mudhahhaba*, p. 122.

[8] Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 6:14.

which was equal in value to all of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's possessions.[9] According to Shīʿite sources the reason why the Prophet rejected all four was because he did not receive divine approval.[10] The marriage of ʿAlī and Fāṭima was, in this view, preordained in heaven.[11] The angel Gabriel himself is said to have told the Prophet that he must offer his daughter to ʿAlī in marriage, adding that ʿAlī, like the Kaʿba, is worthy of pilgrimage.[12]Gabriel further informed him that ʿAlī was created as Fāṭima's equal, and that he was the only spouse she could have.[13] Shī'ite tradition goes on to relate that ʿAlī wanted to ask the Prophet for his daughter's hand in marriage but did not have the courage to do so. The Prophet, who was aware of this, sent him a message that he should come and see him in the house of his wife Umm Salma (Hind bint Suhayl, d. 681 CE). At the same time the Prophet also called on ʿAmmār b. Yāsir (d. 657 CE) and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (d. 687 CE). When everyone had arrived the Prophet told ʿAlī that God had ordered him to give him Fāṭima in marriage.[14] ʿAlī protested that he was too poor and that the only things he could give as bridal money were his sword, his horse and his armor, whereupon the Prophet told him to sell the latter. ʿAlī duly sold his armor for four-hundred dirhams to Diḥya al-Kalbī (d. 665 CE). When ʿAlī had taken the money Diḥya gave him back his armor as a gift. ʿAlī took the armor, and when he told the story to the Prophet the latter informed him that it was the angel Gabriel in the form of Diḥya who had bought the armor and given it back, and that the money which he had been paid for it was God's gift in honor of Fāṭima.[15]

The problem of ʿAlī's bridal money is thus seen to have been solved by heaven, since God had decreed that these two were meant only for each other. God's purpose, in the Shīʿite view, was that the two should give birth to the first of the line of imāms who would lead the Muslim nation. The fact that the Prophet accepted ʿAlī and rejected the other suitors is deemed proof of ʿAlī's essential purity and superiority.[16]

[9] Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma*, . 12.

[10] Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Qaṣīda al-mudhahhaba*, p. 122; Ibn al-Mughāzilī, *Manāqib al-imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, p. 346; Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 1:225, no. 3.

[11] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 1:460–461; Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 1:30; idem, *Maʿānī al-akhbār*, p. 104; al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, 1:36; al-Khuzāʿī, *al-Arbaʿīn*, p. 68; Ibn Shādhān, *al-Faḍā'il*, pp. 35–36; Ibn al-Mughāzilī, *al-Manāqib*, pp. 342–343.
Although in this particular, Sh'īte and Sunnī traditions differ, there is a similar Sunnī tradition, related by Ibn Māja, that when ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān married the Prophet's daughter Umm Kulthūm the Prophet said to him: "O ʿUthmān, it was Gabriel who told me that it was God's will that you marry Umm Kulthūm for the same bridal money as (you paid for my other daughter) Ruqayya (for details see Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, 1: 40–41.

[12] Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma*, p. 12.

[13] Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 1:225, no. 3.

[14] Al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿẓīn*, 1:144–145; Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 1:225, no. 2; Furāt b. Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr Furāt*, pp. 413–141, no. 413 – 552; Ibn Bābawayh, *al-amālī*, pp. 588–589, no. 1; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:111, no. 24, 101:87, no. 53.

[15] Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma*, p. 13.

[16] Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Qaṣīda al-mudhahhaba*, pp. 122–123.

Accounts of the wedding of ʿAlī and Fāṭima abound in both Sunnī and Shīʿite tradition. The descriptions, however, differ greatly. Sunnī historical sources describe the wedding as a very modest affair, albeit one at which all Muslims, and the Prophet in particular, rejoiced very much.[17] The Shīʿite version is much more elaborate; it speaks of two celebrations, one in heaven and the other on earth. More attention is given to the heavenly feast, attended by a host of angels. It is the details of these feasts to which we shall turn in the following pages.

We should point out that although some late Sunnī sources accept Shīʿite accounts of the wedding ceremony,[18] most standard Sunnī texts either make no mention of these accounts, or declare them to be unreliable.[19]

Fāṭima's bridal money[20]

In the traditions in question separate bridal money was given for Fāṭima in heaven and on earth. According to one tradition her earthly bridal money amounted to four-hundred-and-eighty dirhams, which the Prophet ordered to be paid two-thirds in perfume and one-third in garments.[21] In another tradition the sum is put at four-hundred *mithqāl* of silver. Other sums and quantities mentioned are five-hundred dirhams,[22] a coat of mail worth thirty dirhams,[23] and a lambskin bed.

It is related that Fāṭima wept before her father because of the modest sum ʿAlī had paid. The Prophet consoled her by saying that of all their relatives none was superior to ʿAlī and that God himself had ordained that they be married. He then added: "Know that God has made a fifth of the earth bridal money for you; know also that whoever shall walk on the earth and hate Fāṭima and her progeny, will be cursed on the earth until the Day of Judgment.[24]

The Prophet's answer, that in fact the bridal money she was given was of greater worth than that given to any other woman, accords with the Shīʿite view that Fāṭima was indeed superior to any other woman in all worlds, and therefore deserving of gifts superior to those of any other bride.

In addition to her earthly bridal money, she also received, in accordance with

[17] Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 6:15.

[18] The Sunnī imam Ibn Shādhān (d. 426/1034) mentions a tradition which accepts some details of the Shīʿite depiction of the wedding, although most Sunnī scholars reject it. For more details see Ibn Shādhān, *Mashyakhat Ibn Shādhān al-ṣughrā*, p. 71.

[19] Al-Bustī in his biography of the Prophet says: "Many long tales have been told concerning her marriage, but I have refrained from mentioning them because their transmission is faulty". For more details see al-Bustī, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, p. 152.

[20] For more on the concept of bridal money see O. Spies, "Mahr", *EI*², s.v.

[21] Al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, 1:146.

[22] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:399–400; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 5:377–378, no. 42, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:144, no. 42.

[23] Al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 7:364, no. 40; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:400, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:105, no. 43, 20:113, no. 24; al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, 21:250–251, nos. 27014, 27017.

[24] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 5:378, nos. 6–7, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:144, no. 43.

Shīʿite tradition, a heavenly gift consisting of a fifth of the earth, a third of Paradise, four terrestrial rivers: the Nile, the Euphrates, Nahrawān and Balakh, and also five-hundred dirhams.[25]

Other traditions put her bridal worth as half of Paradise, one-fifth of this world and everything in it, four rivers, and a fifth of the booty, all God's gift to Fāṭima, and therefore "no one has the right to deny her even a single hair of it".[26]

The witnesses to the wedding in Paradise

In Islām a marriage ceremony must be witnessed. It must not remain secret, nor should it be open to denial. The Prophet himself is quoted as saying: "There is no marriage without witnesses", and also "There can be no marriage without [the presence of] a guardian and two just witnesses; otherwise it is not valid".[27] Two witnesses are thus required.

Since Fāṭima's wedding in Paradise was a special occasion for a special person, the wedding ceremony was witnessed by the angels Gabriel and Michael[28] as well as all the other angels and houris.[29] According to Shīʿite tradition, as soon as the angel Rāḥīl finished the wedding speech, God himself and His angels confirmed the marriage of Fāṭima and ʿAlī.[30]

The wedding ceremony in Paradise

Shīʿite sources relate that Gabriel performed the ceremony. He was also ʿAlī's proxy, while Michael was the Prophet's. According to one tradition, God Himself inspired Gabriel to wed "light to light".[31] It was Gabriel who asked for Fāṭima's hand, and God caused Rāḥīl,[32] the most eloquent of the angels, to give the wedding

[25] Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, p. 18.

[26] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, 15:65, nos. 17549–9 – 17550–10, 17:25, no. 20644–5.

[27] Al-Zaylaʿī, *Naṣb al-rāya li-aḥādīth al-hidāya*, 3:167. We should mention here that according to Twelver Shīʿism the presence of witnesses at the wedding ceremony is considered desirable, but not necessary; a marriage ceremony conducted without witnesses is thus valid.

[28] Ibn Bābawayh, *al-amālī*, p. 439.

[29] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:395.

[30] Al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, 14:209, no. 16517–11.

[31] Among Shīʿites light (*nūr*) is one of the most prominent attributes of the Prophet, ʿAlī and Fāṭima. This is a divine light which God created expressly for them and their offspring, when they were all still spirits and shadows, many centuries before they were born. Shīʿite tradition relates that when God wanted to create them He placed these shadows in a column of light in Adam's spine, whence it entered the spines of the prophets until it reached the spine of ʿAbd al-Muṭallib (d. 579 CE), the Prophet's grandfather. From him the column of light split into two. One part reached the Prophet through his father ʿAbd Allāh, eventually to reach Fāṭima. The other part reached ʿAlī through his father Abū Ṭālib. Thus both ʿAlī and Fāṭima had the divine light in them, and they bequeathed it to their sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and all the imāms who were their descendants. For more details see: Uri Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nur Muhammad", *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975): 62–119.

[32] Furāt Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr Furāt*, p. 414, nos. 413–552; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, 14:208, no. 16515–9; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, pp. 12–13; Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 1:224, no. 1; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, 1:145; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:128, no. 32.

speech[33] from the "podium of honor" (*minbar al-karāma*)[34] in the "inhabited house" (*al-bayt al-maʿmūr*)[35] before an audience from the seven heavens. According to the Shīʿite account this was a speech the likes of which none in heaven or on earth had ever heard. When it was over Michael called on those present to come to the wedding celebration.[36]

The celebration of Fāṭima's marriage in Paradise

According to Shīʿite tradition Fāṭima's marriage in Paradise took place before her earthly wedding. In preparation for the wedding God ordered all the angels and the other denizens of Paradise to decorate all the trees and palaces there, and made the winds of Paradise spread a sweet perfume. In addition, God ordered the houris of Paradise to sing and to recite aloud the following chapters of the Qurʾān: 20, 26, 27, 28, 36 and 42.[37]

God then sent a white cloud which rained pearls, emeralds and sapphires.[38] He also ordered Riḍwān, the guardian of Paradise, to shake the Ṭūbā tree, which then shed leaves equal in number to the number of supporters of the Prophet's family. Angels of light were then created, each of whom took one leaf which it would keep until the Day of Judgment, when it would present it to one of the supporters of the Prophet's family, as protection against being committed to the fires of Hell.[39]

According to another tradition the Ṭūbā tree bore white pearls, red sapphires and green emeralds which were picked by the houris. Each houri put its jewel in a dish and gave it to another to keep until the Day of Judgment, saying: "This is the gift of the best of women [i.e. Fāṭima]".

[33] Some traditions claim that Gabriel gave the wedding speech, see: Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:395.

[34] According to tradition this is the same podium on which Adam spoke when God taught him the names of things. See al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, 14:208–209, no. 16517–11.

[35] The "inhabited house" is mentioned in the Qur'ān (4:52). Different traditions give differing descriptions of this house. According to some it stands in the fourth heaven; angels worship in it: every day seventy-thousand angels enter it, never to return to it again. In other traditions it is located in the first or lowest heaven and is visited by seventy-thousand angels daily. Yet other traditions explain it as referring to the Kaʿba, which is "inhabited" by pilgrims (for details see: al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 9:272). Al-Rāzī adds to what al-Ṭabarsī reports as another opinion, namely that the "inhabited house" is in the highest heaven, next to God's throne, and is named for the numerous angels which constantly hover around it. For more on the "inhabited house" see: Th. P. Hughes, "Al-Baitu 'l-Ma'mūr", *Dictionary of Islam*, s.v. The Shīʿites would seem to have adopted the view that it is in the seventh heaven, next to the throne.

[36] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:395.

[37] Furāt b. Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr Furāt*, p. 414, no. 413–552; Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 1:224, no. 1; al-Ṣaddūq, *al-Amālī*, 559, no. 1; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 101:87, no. 53.

[38] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:395.

[39] Some Shīʿite sources relate that on the anniversary of Ġadīr Khumm (the 18th of Dhū al-ḥijja, the day on which the Prophet announced that ʿAlī was his lawful heir) the inhabitants of Paradise gather in a palace made of silver and gold bricks and give each other presents which they call "Fāṭima's trinkets" (*nuthār Fāṭima*), whereupon God announces that they shall now be safe from misfortune until the next anniversary (for more details see: Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:43). We can assume that the jewels which the inhabitants of Paradise gave each other as presents at Fāṭima's heavenly wedding served a similar purpose.

Yet another tradition relates that the fruits of Paradise fell on the angels.[40] Then a voice announced from beneath the throne: "Today is ʿAlī's banquet. You are my witnesses that I gave Fāṭima to ʿAlī in marriage so that they will delight in each other". Whereupon a cloud began raining pearls, emeralds and sapphires.[41]

The afore-mentioned traditions would seem to constitute a kind of reaction to the social inferiority imposed on Fāṭima in her real life. What they perceived as an unfitting status was corrected by means of imaginary daydreams and wishful thinking.

ʿAlī and Fāṭima's knowledge of their heavenly wedding

A number of Shīʿite sources tell us that Fāṭima and ʿAlī were aware of the wedding celebration which took place in their honor in Paradise. According to one tradition the Prophet told ʿAlī that God had married him to Fāṭima in Paradise before their earthly wedding, explaining that "if God wants to honor His friend, He does so with something which no eye has seen and no ear has heard".[42] Upon hearing this ʿAlī thanked God by reciting a verse from the Qur'ān.[43] Fāṭima, too, knew of her heavenly wedding, for in a boasting match with her husband she proudly announced that in heaven the angel Rāḥīl gave her in marriage, and that the amount of her bridal money was determined in heaven.[44] Both Fāṭima and ʿAlī are thus taken in Shīʿite tradition to have known of their marriage in Paradise.

The picture which these traditions intend to convey is that this marriage was indeed "made in heaven", in the sense that both spouses were extremely content with their marriage to each other, a marriage which they perceived as a fulfillment of God's wishes.

The earthly wedding

Forty days after the wedding celebration in Paradise, according to Shīʿite tradition, the earthly marriage between Fāṭima and ʿAlī took place, either on the first or the sixth day of the month of Dhū al-ḥijja[45] or, according to some other traditions, a few days after the battle of Badr (624 CE).[46] Shīʿite sources relate that the Prophet was

[40] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:394–395; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, 1:144; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:107.

[41] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:395.

[42] Ibn Furāt, *Tafsīr Furāt*, p. 415, no. 413–552.

[43] Q 27:19: "My Lord! grant me that I should be grateful for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I should do good such as Thou art pleased with, and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones" (Translation: M.H. Shakir).

[44] Ibn Shādhān, *al-Faḍā'il*, p. 80.

[45] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:398; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*. 15"65. no. 1755–10.

[46] Al-Kanjī, *Kifāyat al-ṭālib*, p. 308. According to the traditions which date the wedding on earth to the first or sixth of the month of Dhū al-ḥijja in the year 2 AH, forty days after the wedding in Paradise, the latter must have occurred on the twentieth or the twenty-fourth of the month of Shawwāl in the same year. On the other hand, the traditions which date the earthly wedding a few days after the battle of Badr (for details see Al-Kanjī, *Kifāyat al-ṭālib*, p. 308), which took place on the seventeenth of Ramaḍān in the year 2 AH, imply a different time for the wedding in Paradise as well. At any rate, there is clearly some doubt as to the precise date of Fāṭima's wedding.

approached by an angel with twenty-four-thousand faces who told him: "I am not Gabriel but Maḥmūd. God sent me to marry light to light". The Prophet asked whom he meant and the angel answered: "Fāṭima to ʿAlī". When the angel turned to leave the Prophet saw an inscription between the angel's shoulders: "Muḥammad is the messenger of God and ʿAlī is his regent". The Prophet then asked the angel when these words were inscribed. The angel replied: "Twenty-two-thousand years before God created Adam". According to another tradition it was twenty-four-thousand years.[47]

A different account relates that the Prophet was in the house of his wife Umm Salama[48] when he was approached by the angel Ṣarṣā'īl, who possessed twenty heads, on each of which there were one-thousand people, each of whom praised God in a different language. The angel's hand was wider than seven heavens and seven earths. The Prophet thought this was Gabriel, but the angel said to him: "I am not Gabriel but Ṣarṣā'īl. God has sent me to you so that you may marry the light to the light". The prophet then asked: "Who should marry whom?", whereupon the angel answered: "Fāṭima should marry ʿAlī, with Gabriel, Michael and Ṣarṣā'il as witnesses". The Prophet then noticed that the angel had the following inscription written between his shoulders: "There is no God but Allāḥ, Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib who carries out the duty of the Imamate[*muqīm al-ḥujja*]". The prophet asked the angel when the inscription was written. The angel answered: "Twelve-thousand years before God created the world".[49]

Traditions of this kind clearly have the purpose of demonstrating the truth of the Shīʿite belief in the superiority of ʿAlī and his descendants, a superiority which is deemed to have been preordained since before Creation. They thus legitimize the Shīʿite ideology, which is claimed to go back many millennia.

According to yet another tradition the Prophet said to Fāṭima: "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is someone whose kinship and merits in Islām are known, and I have asked my God that He should marry you to the best of His creatures and the one most beloved of Him". Fāṭima remained silent after having heard her father's words, whereupon the Prophet announced: "God is great! Her silence is equivalent to agreement". He then ascended the podium and gave a sermon about the marriage of his daughter Fāṭima.[50]

The angels' role at Fāṭima's wedding celebration

In Shīʿite tradition angels play a prominent role in both the heavenly and the earthly wedding of Fāṭima. She is considered closer to God than other women, and her wed-

[47] According to another tradition the angel, named Ṣarṣā'īl, possessed twenty heads, each populated by one-thousand people (for details see Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:398; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43: 111, nos. 23–24; al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghuma*, 1:352; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, 1:146.

[48] For details about her see: R. Ruded, "Umm Salama Hind", *EI²*, s.v.

[49] Al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma*, 1:353, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:123, no. 31; Ibn Shādhān, *Mi'at manqaba*, p. 35.

[50] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *al-Manāqib*, 3:398–399; al-Ṭabarī, *Bishārat al-muṣṭafā*, p. 262; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 40, no. 44–13.

ding therefore attracts the attention of the dwellers of heaven. In Paradise the angel Gabriel or, according to some traditions, the angel Rāḥīl, gives the wedding sermon in the "inhabited house".[51] The angels are also reported to have decorated Paradise for the wedding on the command of God Himself. The wedding itself was attended by numerous angels, spirits and cherubs.[52]

As for the terrestrial wedding ceremony, the angel Gabriel is reported to have descended in order to inform the Prophet of God's decision that Fāṭīma shall marry ʿAlī. Gabriel is also said to have brought the Prophet a carnation and an ear of corn from the decorations of the wedding ceremony in Paradise. Gabriel also shouted "God is great" at the earthly festivities. This, according to tradition, was the first time this cry was heard at a Muslim wedding, and from then on it became customary.[53]

According to another tradition the Prophet was accompanied by seventy-thousand angels as he walked in Fāṭima's procession towards ʿAlī. In addition, the angel Riḍwān sent Fāṭima perfume from heaven for her wedding. The perfume was brought to her by houris.

Discussion and conclusion

The main purpose of all the above-mentioned Shīʿite traditions is to demonstrate the important position which Fāṭīma occupies in the eyes of God, who mobilized countless angels and houris to prepare her wedding and to be present at the ceremony in Paradise. These divine exertions on Fāṭīma's behalf constitute a miracle through which her status, and consequently the status of her admirers, the Shīʿites, is enhanced.

Shīʿites consider Fāṭima a saint whom events have wronged. For this reason they have lifted her up to Paradise, the abode of imāms and prophets. The need to show her saintly character and to stress the miracles which were performed on her behalf thus stems from two basic causes:

1. To show that Fāṭima was worthy of being the Prophet's daughter and ʿAlī's wife, and that God wrought miracles for her, as he did for them.

2. To demonstrate to the detractors of Shīʿism that its articles of faith are not heresy, and that its veneration of Fāṭīma and of her descendants the imāms is justified.

Such traditions may well also constitute an attempt to provide a haven of sorts from the pain and fear felt by Shīʿites in the real world, through an escape into an imaginary world of daydreams. These traditions describe a Paradise very different from the everyday world of Shīʿites, tell of utterances which modify the laws of nature and fulfill latent desires, such as the desire for money as expressed in the fruit of the Ṭūbā tree in Paradise. In short, they express an ever present hope that words will be

[51] Al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, 14:208–209, no. 16517–11.

[52] According to some sources the ceremony was held in Paradise under the Ṭūbā tree in a valley named al-Afyaḥ. For details see: al-Kanjī, *Kifāyat al-ṭālib*, p. 300.

[53] See: al-Kanjī, *Kifāyat al-ṭālib*, p. 303.

able to triumph where actions have failed, that non-believers in Shīʿism will eventually be led to believe in the miracles performed on Fāṭima's behalf.

To the true Shīʿite believers, the traditions concerning Fāṭima's wedding provide proof of her powers, and give hope that she may be able improve their present and future lot, economically and socially.

From a theological point of view the stories about Fāṭima's wedding stress the merits of the mother of all future Shīʿite imāms, chosen by God for this purpose and married in heaven on God's command. Furthermore, the imāms are descended from both the best of all women, the Prophets daughter, and the best of all men, the Prophet's cousin. This provides the foundation for the belief that the imāms themselves are not like other men. They are holy men protected by God.

As a final comment, we should stress the fact that we express no opinion here as to the historicity or otherwise of various historical "facts" mentioned in the traditions discussed above. Our inquiry is not affected by the truth or falseness of these traditions, since our aim has been to analyse the motivation and purpose behind the acceptance and dissemination of these traditions among Shīʿites for many generations.

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"FĀṬIMA'S BOOK". A SHĪʿITE QUR'ĀN?

Introduction

Shīʿite [1] Imāms are said to possess numerous [2] attributes. Spiritually they are said to be wiser, more knowledgeable, more devout, braver, more generous and more humble than other mortals. Other, more physical, attributes ascribed to them include the following: they are born circumscised, they are in a constant state of ritual purity, they see what is behind them just as they see what is in front of them, they do not cast a shadow, when they are born they immediately stand on their feet and declaim the two *shahādas*, they do not dream, their eyes fall asleep but not their heart, and they can hear the voices of the angels, although they cannot see them.[3] Additional bodily attributes they possess are that the Prophet's armor fits them, their urine and feces cannot be seen because they are immediately swallowed up by the earth, and they smell better than musk oil. They are closer to people than the people are to themselves, and more affectionate than their own parents. They are humbler before God than anyone, but all their prayers are answered, even if they call on a rock to split into two. They are supported by the Holy Spirit, a pillar of light stands between them and God, they are able to see the deeds of men, and to provide a sign of their standing if required. They possess the Prophet's arms,[4] including his sword Dhū al-Faqār,[5] his banner al-Mighlaba, his armor Dhū al-Fuḍūl, his cuirass and helmet, as well as Moses' Tablets and Staff, the ring of Solomon son of David, and the bowl in which Moses sacrificed.[6]

The Imāms are also said to have the gift of prescience,[7] inherited from the Prophet, who himself received it from earlier prophets who learned it from the angel Gabriel.[8] Such prescience is considered by Shīʿites to constitute proof that its possessor is indeed an Imām.

This occult knowledge which the Imāms inherited from the Prophet

[1] Whenever the words Shiʿite and Shiʿism are used in this paper they refer to Imāmi or Twelver Shiʿism.

[2] According to some authorities the Imāms possess a total of thirty distinguishing characteristics. For details see, for example: Ibn Bābawayh, 1982a, 2:528-530, nos. 1-3; Idem, 1958, 1:213, chapter 19, ḥadīth no. 1; Idem, 1982b, p. 103.

[3] In Shiʿite traditions the Imāms and Fāṭima in their role as receivers of the words of the angels are referred to as *muḥaddath*. For further discussion see Kohlberg, 1979, pp. 39-47; www.al-kawthar.com/shobohat/moshaf/moshaf1.html

[4] For more details on the Prophet's arms see: Ibn al-Jawzī, 1988, pp. 689-693.

[5] On the sword Dhū al-Faqār see: Sindawi, 2000-2001, pp. 201-218.

[6] Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 2:372; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:23; Al-Mufīd, 1992a, 2:187; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, pp. 175,186; Al-Fattāl, 1966, 1:210; Al-Irbillī, 1961, 2:171; Ibn Sharāshūb, 1959, 4:276.

[7] Al-Fattāl, 1966, 1:210; Ibn Bābawayh, 1982a, 2:527; Idem, 1992, 4:419, no. 5914; Al-Rāwandī, 1988, 2:894; Al-Mufīd, 1992a, 2:186; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1970, p. 284; Idem, 1982, 2:372.

[8] See: Pedersen, 1991, 2:362-364.

Muḥammad was handed down up to the twelfth,[1] or hidden, Imām, who disappeared[2] in the city of Sāmarrā'[3] in the year 874 CE. The gift of prescience is said to have disappeared with him, as did quite a number of other things, including the following:

(A) A scroll with the names of all Shī'ites down to the Day of Judgment.

(B) Another scroll, with the names of the enemies of Shī'ism down to the Day of Judgment.[4]

(C) *"The Red Lambskin" (al-jafr al-aḥmar)*[5] – a pouch made of red-painted or tanned hide containing the Prophet's sword, which will only be taken out again when the twelfth Imām will reappear at the end of time[6] and use it in the battle against the enemies of Shī'ism.[7]

(D) *"The White Lambskin" (al-jafr al-abyaḍ)*[8] – a white leather pouch containing books which encompass the entire knowledge of the prophets and Imāms (*waṣī*),[9] as well as that of the ancient sages of the Children of Israel. There are fourteen volumes in all, each one divided into fourteen parts. The books which they contain are the following:

– The Pentateuch as revealed to Moses.[10]

– Abraham's Scrolls[11] (these are the first of God's books,[12] consisting of twenty leaves which God revealed to Abraham, containing fables, warnings and praises of God).

– The Psalms of David[13, 14] (one-hundred-and-fifty psalms).[15]

(E) The *Ṣaḥīfa* ("The Scroll"),[16] also known as *al-ṣaḥīfa al-jāmi'a* ("The Comprehensive Scroll"), *al-muṣḥaf* ("The Codex"),[17] and *ṣaḥīfat al-aḥkām al-jāmi'a*

[1] See: Ter Haar, 1993, 7:443; Sachedina, 1981.

[2] For more on the occultation of the twelfth Imām see: Macdonald, 1991, 2:1026.

[3] See: Northedge, 1995, 8:1041.

[4] Al-Fattāl, 1966, 2:527; Ibn Bābawayh, 1992, 4:419, no. 5914.

[5] On *al-jafr* see: Fahd, 1965, 2:375-377; Al-'Āmilī, 1999.

[6] Al-Irbillī, 1961, 2:172; Al-Rāwandī, 1988, 2:894.

[7] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:241, no. 3; Al-Mufīd, 1992, 2:186; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 152, no. 3; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1970, p. 284; Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 74.

[8] See: Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:240, no. 3; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1970, p. 285.

[9] On the concept of *waṣī*, see: Kohlberg, 2002, 11:161-162; Rubin, 1979, pp. 41-66.

[10] On the Pentateuch in Islam see: Lazarus-Yafeh, 2000, 10:393-395.

[11] On Abraham see: Paret, 1986, 3:980.

[12] Al-Ṭabarsī, 1970, p. 285; Al-Tha'ālibī, 1985, p. 43; Al-Jazā'irī, 1983, pp. 5,166; Ibn Abī Firās, 1956, 2:67; Ibn Bābawayh, 1982b, p. 334.

[13] Al-Mufīd, 1992, 2:186; Al-Rāwandī, 1988, 2:894; Al-Irbillī, 1961, p. 172; Al-Fattāl, 1966, 1:211; Horovitz, 2002, 11:372-373.

[14] They are mentioned in the Qur'ān (4:163): "And we imparted unto David the Psalms". See Pickthall, 2000, p. 109.

[15] Al-Irbillī, 1961, 2:172; Al-Sāmarrā'ī, 1966-1967, p. 67.

[16] For further details see: Al-Astar'ābādī, 1988, p. 108; Al-Rāwandī, 1988, 2:894; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:239, no. 1, 1:242, no. 6; Ibn Bābawayh, 1982a, 2:528; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1970, p. 285; Al-Mufīd, 1992a, 2:186; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 147, nos. 1,2, p. 148, nos. 5,6,7,8, p. 149, nos. 12, 13, p. 151, no. 2, p. 152, no. 3, p. 154, no. 6, p. 160, no. 3; Ibn Bābawayh, 1958, 1:213.

[17] Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 161; Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 73; Al-'Āmilī, 1988, 29:356, no. 35771.

("The Comprehensive Scroll of Precepts")[1] – a book dictated to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[2] (d. 661) by the Prophet and written in his own handwriting. It is related that when Muḥammad was in the midst of dictating the *Ṣaḥīfa* to ʿAlī he fainted, whereupon the angel Gabriel descended and finished to dictate to ʿAlī. When Muḥammad regained consciousness he asked ʿAlī who dictated to him, to which ʿAlī responded: "You were the one who dictated to me", to which the Prophet replied: "I dictated to you its inner aspect and Gabriel dictated to you its outer aspect". According to this tradition, it was a Qur'ān that was dictated to him,[3] which contained "all the precepts a man would need until the Day of Judgment, and all the permitted and forbidden things, even the indemnity for a scratch and a lash-and-a-half of the whip. The length (of the scroll) was seventy cubits (as measured by the length of the Prophet's arm)".[4]

Some sources add that it contained the "leaves" of 124,000 prophets.[5]

(F) *"ʿAlī's Book"* (*kitāb ʿAlī*) – this was a copy of the Qur'ān which the Prophet, when on his death bed,[6] ordered ʿAlī to compile. This he did, in three days. According to another tradition, quoting Ibn ʿAbbās[7] (d. 687 CE), the compilation lasted six months.[8] This, according to Shīʿite tradition, was the only complete copy of the Qur'ān.[9]

It is claimed that the text in this version of the Qur'ān was ordered chronologically, in the order in which the various chapters were revealed.[10] Furthermore, in every case of abrogation, the abrogating verse preceded the one abrogated.[11] The Shīʿites also believe that this version included within it a commentary, explanations as to the circumstances in which various verses were revealed (*asbāb al-nuzūl*),[12] a distinction between precise and ambiguous verses, as well as the names of those who spoke the truth and those who spoke falsely.[13]

(G) *"The Two Books"* (*al-ṣaḥīfa, al-kitābān*) – the first of the two books, *The Book of the Adherents of the Right Side* (*Kitāb aṣḥāb al-yamīn*), contains the names of those destined to go to Paradise, the names of their fathers and of their tribes; the second book, *The Book of the Adherents of the Left Side* (*Kitāb aṣḥāb al-shimāl*) contains the same information concerning those destined to go to Hell.[14]

[1] Al-Irbillī, 1961, 2:276. [2] Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, 4:276. [3] Al-Mufīd, 1992b, p. 275.
[4] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:241-242, no. 7; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 2:437; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, pp. 142ff.
[5] Donaldson, 1933, p. 49. [6] Al-Qummī, 1983, 2:451; Al-Majlisī, 1984, 92:48.
[7] For details see: Vaglieri, 1986, 1:40-41. [8] Ibn Sharāshūb, 1959, 2:14.
[9] Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 74. [10] Murtaḍā, 1989, p. 159. [11] Al-Majlisī, 1984, 92:74.
[12] *Ibidem*, 92:41. [13] Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 1:383.
[14] Shīʿite sources relate that God gave these two books to the Prophet Muḥammad. The circumstances were as follows: once the Prophet was napping in the shade of the Kaʿba when Gabriel came to him with a bowl of water from Paradise. The angel awakened the Prophet, told him to perform an ablution with the water and then carried him to heaven on a litter of light. When they reached the lotus tree in the Seventh Heaven (*sidrat al-muntahā*) God gave the Prophet the two books. For more details see: Al-ʿAyyāshī, 1960, 1:157-159, no. 530; Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, 2:160; Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 74.

(H) *"The Book"* or *"The Books"* – a book, or books, containing the names of the kings and rulers on earth. It is also called *ʿAlī's Book* (*Kitāb ʿAlī*) or *Fāṭima's Book* (*Kitāb Fāṭima*).[1]

(I) *"The Scroll"* (*al-ṣaḥīfa*) – a list of the names and descent of those who will believe in the twelve Imāms until the Day of Judgment.[2]

(J) *"The Scroll"* (*al-ṣaḥīfa*) – a list of the names of the enemies of the believers[3] until the Day of Judgment.[4]

(K) *"The Imbecile Scroll"* (*al-ṣaḥīfa al-ʿabīṭa*)[5] – a list of the names of tawdry Arab tribes who have no share in God's religion.

(L) *"Fāṭima's Book"* (*Muṣḥaf Fāṭīma* or *Kitāb Fāṭima*) – the subject of the present paper.

The revelation of "Fāṭima's Book"[6]

A perusal of the Shīʿite sources reveals that there exist a number of different versions concerning the manner in which "Fāṭima's Book" was revealed. They are as follows:

(A) Gabriel came down and spoke its contents to Fāṭima over a period of seventy-five days, in order to take her mind off the recent death of her father the Prophet Muḥammad: "He alleviated her grief for her father, raised her spirits, and told her about her father [in Paradise] and about her future descendants".[7] This is the most commonly accepted account in the Shīʿite sources.

(B) The angels Gabriel, Michael and Isrāfīl[8] revealed it to Fāṭima at a single stroke, during the second third of a Friday night. Fāṭima was standing in prayer when the angels arrived, and they waited until she finished. Then they greeted her, saying to her: "Peace recites peace to you", and placed the book in her lap, whereupon she said: "Peace be on God, peace be from him, and peace be on you, messengers of God". Then they ascended to heaven and she continued reading from after the dawn prayer until sundown, when she reached the end of the book.[9]

(C) The book was dictated piecemeal by Gabriel to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib during the Prophet's lifetime.[10]

[1] Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 74.
[2] *Ibidem*; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 2:437.
[3] It should be pointed out that the word "believer" (*muʾmin*) in the Shīʿite lexicon refers only to a "true believer" in the Shīʿite Imāmate, in contrast to the word "Muslim" which denotes a believer in the Sunnite creed. For more on this issue see, for example: Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 2:27-28, nos. 1-2; Amir-Moezzi, *op. cit.*, p. 146, fn. 43.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 74; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 2:437.
[5] Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 150, no. 15.
[6] For more detail on Fāṭima see: Vaglieri, 1991, 2:841-850.
[7] Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 154, no. 6; Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 14; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:241, no. 5.
[8] For more on these angels see: Madelung, 1991, 6:216-219.
[9] Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 28.
[10] Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 157, no. 16.

(D) The book was revealed to the Prophet during his lifetime and he then dictated it to Fāṭima and ʿAlī wrote it down in his own hand.[1]

(E) The book was not revealed to anyone. Rather, it was composed by ʿAlī and presented it to his wife in order to help her overcome her grief at the death of her father the Prophet Muḥammad.[2]

(F) Fāṭima heard the book's contents in her sleep, not by way of prophecy, whereupon she said to her husband ʿAlī: "I hear reports and stories". She then dictated them to him, and he made of them a book which he called "Fāṭima's Book" (*muṣḥaf Fāṭima*).[3]

THE CONTENTS OF "FĀṬIMA'S BOOK"[4]

Shīʿite sources maintain that "Fāṭima's Book" contains a variety of topics: accounts of future events; the names of the rulers and kings of the earth from Creation until the Day of Judgment; the names of the "tempters" (*ṭawāghīt*) and the length of their rule; the important battles which will be fought on earth; the number of angels in heaven; details about each one of the seven heavens;[5] the number and names of God's messengers; the names of all believers, infidels and others, as well as their fates; the names and descriptions of all the lands of the world, including the number of infidels in each; a description of all those who denied God; the story of the first centuries after Creation; and the names and descriptions of each Shīʿite Imām, as well as the length each one will occupy his office.[6]

Other topics contained in the book are the following: Islamic jurisprudence in its entirety, including the criminal code down to offenses punishable by a single lash, or even a half[7] or a quarter of a lash, such as inflicting a single scratch; the number, names and descriptions of those who will enter Paradise, as well as of those who will go to hell; knowledge of the Qur'ān, the Pentateuch, the Gospel and Psalms just as they were revealed; the number of trees and clods of earth in every land.[8] According to some traditions

[1] *Ibidem*, p. 153, no. 5. The modern Shīʿite writer has proposed that there were in fact two compositions called "Fāṭima's Book", one dictated by the anger Gabriel and the other by her father. See: Al-Amīn, 1950, 1:314.

[2] ʿAbbūd, 1999, p. 59.

[3] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:24, no. 2; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 157, no. 18.

[4] For more details on the contents of "Fāṭima's Book" see, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 27; Al-Rāwandī, 1988, 2:894; Al-Ṭabarsī, 1970, p. 285; Al-Fattāl, 1966, 1:211; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:240, no. 2.

[5] Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 27.

[6] Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 2:273-274. In a tradition which may be related to the matter at hand, Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh the Companion relates that when he came to Fāṭima in order to congratulate her on the birth of her son Al-Ḥasan he found her with a leaf made of white pearl. He asked her what it contained and she answered that it contained the names of her descendants the Imāms. When he then asked her if he could see it, she answered that ordinary mortals were forbidden to touch it, that it could only be touched by prophets and members of the Prophet's family. "But," she said, "I will permit you to look without touching". Whereupon Jābir looked at the leaf and saw on it the names of the Shīʿite Imāms, details of their lives, and the names of their mothers (see: Al-Ṭabarsī, 1982, 2:373-374; Al-ʿĀmilī, 1988, 16:244; Al-Ḥillī, 1987, pp. 70-71; Ibn Bābawayh, 1958, 1:40-41, no. 1).

[7] Al-Irbillī, 1961, 2:172.

[8] Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 28.

"Fāṭima's Book" also contained various proverbs, fables, advice and tales. And, finally, it contained Fāṭima's will.[1]

To sum up, according to Shīʿite tradition "Fāṭima's Book" contained a wealth of information, religious and worldly, important to the Shīʿites.

The fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 765 CE),[2] in answer to the incredulity expressed by Abū Baṣīr[3] at the great number of topics included in "Fāṭima's Book", told him that all of these topics were to found in the first two leaves of the book.[4] In other words the book, according to this tradition, contained other topics in addition to those enumerated above.

A description of "Fāṭima's Book"

The same Abū Baṣīr asked the Imām Al-Bāqir to describe "Fāṭima's Book" to him. He answered: "It contains something of the Qurʾān which was revealed after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, Fāṭima's father. It is seventy cubits long and thick as leather. It has two chrysolite borders along the length and width of the pages. Its color is red. Its pages are made of white pearl. It was told "Be!" and it was. In other words, God revealed it to Fāṭima at a single stroke.[5]

The book's location

According to Shīʿite sources, after Fāṭima's death her book was passed on to her Imām descendents, beginning with her son Al-Ḥasan, the second Imām, down to the twelfth, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, whose occultation occurred in Sāmarrāʾ in the year 874 CE. "Fāṭima's Book" was kept by the Imāms together with other books containing the knowledge and wisdom of past prophets and messengers, none of which were ever shared with the general Shīʿite population.

Such is the testimony of a considerable number of Shīʿite traditions. In one tradition, for example, Ḥammād b. ʿUthmān[6] is quoted as saying: 'Abū Baṣīr told me that he heard Abū Abd Allāh [the sixth Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq[7] (d. 765 CE) say: 'Abū Jaʿfar [the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir] died holding Fāṭima's Book'". The book then passed on to his son, the sixth Imām, then to the seventh, Mūsā al-Kāẓim[8] (d. 799 CE) and so on until the twelfth.

[1] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:241, no. 4; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 157, no. 16.

[2] For more on the fifth Imām, see: Kohlberg, 1993a, pp. 645-648.

[3] For more on Abū Baṣīr, see: Ibn Dāwūd, 1963, p. 371, no. 1661, p. 393, no. 7, p. 526, no. 537, p. 532; Al-Barqī, 1963, p. 11; Al-Ṭūsī, 1994, p. 149, no. 1651-3, p. 321, no. 4792-9, p. 346, no. 5174-18; Al-Ḥillī, 1990, p. 264, no. 3; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 442, no. 1187; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 474-475, no. 901.

[4] Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 28.

[5] Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 27.

[6] Ibn Dāwūd, pp. 131-132, no. 511, p. 385; Al-Ṭūsī, 1994, p. 186, no. 2281-138, p. 334, no. 4971-2, p. 354, no. 5240-10; Al-Barqī, 1963, pp. 48,53; Al-Ḥillī, 1990, p. 56, no. 3; Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 372, no. 694.

[7] For details on the sixth Imām see: Hodgson, 1965, 2:374-375.

[8] For details on the seventh Imām see: Kohlberg, 1993a, 7:645-648.

THE IMĀMS READ "FĀṬIMA'S BOOK"

Mention was made above of the fact that among the contents of "Fāṭima's Book" was a list of all the rulers of the world, from Creation to the Day of Judgment. Shīʿite sources relate that the Imāms would use the list in cases of doubt. Here are a number of such traditions told of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.

In one tradition Fuḍayl b. Sukkara[1] relates as follows: "When I entered into the presence of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib he asked: 'Oh Fuḍayl, do you know what I was looking at just a few minutes ago?' I said: 'No'. Then he said: 'I was reading Fāṭima's Book, in which all the kings on earth are listed by their name and the name of their father, and I found that none of the children of Al-Ḥusayn are listed there'".[2]

According to a second tradition ʿAbd al-Malik b. Aʿyan[3] came to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and informed him that the Zaydīs[4] and the Muʿtazilites[5] had forged close ties with Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 762 CE). He asked him: "Will Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh[6] become ruler?" Al-Ṣādiq answered: "I have in my possession two books with the names of every prophet and every king who will ever rule on earth, and the name Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh does not appear in either".[7]

A third tradition has Al-Ṣādiq addressing Al-Walīd b. Ṣabīḥ[8] as follows: "Oh Walīd, I looked through Fāṭima's Book for the sons of so-and-so and found only the barest of mention."[9]

CONFUSION BETWEEN "THE BOOK OF DIVINATION" (*KITĀB AL-JAFR*) AND "FĀṬIMA'S BOOK"

Some Shīʿite sources confuse "Fāṭima's Book" with "The Book of Divination", taking them to be one.[10] There are two possible reasons for this. One is that "Fāṭima's Book" is considered to be one of the volumes contained in "The White Lambskin" (see above), in which the Imāms' sacred books were kept; the fact that the same word (*jafr*) refers to both lambskin and divination may have been the source of confusion.

A second possible reason is to be found in a story concerning the Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā[11] (d. 818 CE). The Caliph Al-Maʾmūn[12] (813-833 CE)

[1] See: Al-Ṭūsī, 1994, p. 270, no. 3880-27; Al-Barqī, 1963, p. 34.
[2] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:242.
[3] See: Al-Ṭūsī, 1994, p. 139, no. 1480-15, p. 238, no. 3253-162; Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 175, no. 300; Ibn Dāwūd, 1963, p. 229, no. 950; Al-Ḥillī, 1990, p. 115, no. 5.
[4] See: Madelung, 2002, 11:477-481.
[5] See" Gimarret, 1993, 7:783-793.
[6] See: Buhl, 7:388-389.
[7] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:242, no. 7.
[8] See: Ibn Dāwūd, 1963, p. 362, no. 1620; Al-Barqī, 1963, p. 41; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 319-320, no. 579; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 413, no. 1161.
[9] Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 161, no. 32.
[10] This issue has been discussed at length by the contemporary Shīʿite scholar Akram al-ʿĀmilī. For more details see: Al-ʿĀmilī, 1997, pp. 193-200.
[11] See: Lewis, 1960a, 1:399-400.
[12] See: Rekaya, 1991, 4:331-339.

wanted him to be his heir, but the Imām refused and notified the Caliph in writing that he examined two books, *"Al-Jafr"* and *"Al-Jāmiʿa"*, and in neither was his name listed among the rulers.[1]

If we take this tradition at face value then we see that when the Imām al-Riḍā had need of occult knowledge he did not use "Fāṭima's Book" although it is said, as we saw above, to have contained a list of rulers of the earth. It is then not to be wondered that there were those who came to the conclusion that "Fāṭima's Book" and "The Book of Divination" were two names for one-and-the-same book.

The Qurʾān and "Fāṭima's Book"

Most Shīʿite sources agree that "Fāṭima's Book" did not contain any Qurʾānic texts. In this they rely on Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, who is quoted as having said: "By God, we possess Fāṭima's Book, may she rest in peace. By God, it does not contain a single letter from your Qurʾān, yet it is three times as large as the Qurʾān".[2]

As for the Arabic name *muṣḥaf* given the book, the Shīʿtes point out that this word can refer to any written material bound between two covers, and can therefore be used to name any book and not just the Qurʾān. In fact, although the word is often used to refer to the Qurʾān it never appears in this sense in the Qurʾān itself. Shīʿites insist that the frequent use of the word to refer to the Qurʾān does not in and by itself indicate any change in the word's basic meaning. They furthermore point out that *muṣḥaf* in the sense of the Qurʾān only came into common use among Sunni Muslims after the death of Muḥammad, during the rule of the Caliph Abū Bakr (632-634 CE).[3]

Ibn Ashta (Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh)[4] (d. 971 CE) in his *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif* relates the following quote which Mūsā b. ʿUqba[5] (d. 758 CE) ascribes to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī[6] (d. 742 CE): "When they compiled the Qurʾān and wrote it down on leaves, Abū Bakr asked that a name for it be found. Some suggested *"al-sifr"*, but he said: "That is the name the Jews give", which they found to be offensive. Others proposed *"al-muṣḥaf"*, a term to which they all agreed".[7]

Indeed, the use of the word *Muṣḥaf* to refer to the Qurʾān did not enter common usage until the reign of the Caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān[8] (644-656 CE), and despite its frequent use in that sense since then, it has never lost its more general meaning of "bound book", fact there are not a few books called like that, including the *Muṣḥaf* of Khālid b. Maʿdān[9] (d. 722 CE),

[1] Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, 4:365; Al-Irbillī, 1961, 3:127.
[2] Al-Astarābādī, 1988, p. 109.
[3] On Abū Bakr see: Watt, 1986, 1:109-111.
[4] See: Al-Ziriklī, 1986, 6:224.
[5] *Ibidem*, 7:325.
[6] *Ibidem*, 7:97.
[7] Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1937, p. 18; Al-Suyūṭī, 1941, 1:89; Al-Ṣāliḥ, 1959, pp. 77-78.
[8] See: Della Vida, 2000, 10:946-949.
[9] See: Al-Ziriklī, 1986, 2:299.

whose title was taken from the *Al-Maṣāḥif* of Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī[1] (d. 926 CE), the *Muṣḥaf* of the Prophet's wives ʿĀ'isha bint Abī Bakr[2] (d. 678 CE), Ḥafṣa bint ʿUmar[3] (d. 665 CE) and Umm Salama (Hind bint Suhayl)[4] (d. 681 CE), the *Muṣḥaf* of ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd[5] (d. 653), that of 'Ubayy b. Kaʿb[6] (d. 642 CE) and that of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ[7] (d. 684 CE).

However, these *maṣāḥif* were in fact versions of the Qur'ān with variant readings. For this reason the Caliph ʿUthmān (d. 656) decided to retain only Ḥafṣa bint ʿUmar's copy and to burn all the other *maṣāḥif*.[8] In other words, "Fāṭima's Book", although it was called by the same name (*muṣḥaf*) as the books just mentioned, differed greatly from them with respect to its content.

Still, despite the insistence of Shīʿite sources that "Fāṭima's Book" contained no Qur'ānic texts whatsoever, there is at least one Shīʿite tradition, quoted by a number of sources, to the effect that it did contain some Qur'ānic verses. Let us take, for example, the following tradition: Abū Baṣīr heard a reciter of the Qur'ān reading the third verse of Sura 70 ("The Ways of Ascent") as follows: "A questioner questioned concerning the doom about to fall under the rule of ʿAlī".[9] Abū Baṣīr wondered why the reciter added the expression "under the rule of ʿAlī", which does not appear in the commonly used version of the Qurʿān. When Abū Baṣīr asked the Imām Al-Ṣādiq what the truth of the matter was the Imām told him that the reading that he had heard was the correct and original version of the verse in question, as the angel Gabriel revealed it to the Prophet, and that the proof can be found in "Fāṭima's Book".[10]

If this tradition is indeed trustworthy, then apparently "Fāṭima's Book" did indeed contain also verses of the Qur'ān and, if so, it may also have contained accounts of the reasons for their revelation. At any rate, this tradition would seem to refute the Shīʿite claim that "Fāṭima's Book" was entirely without any Qur'ānic content. Furthermore, although we are not in possession of the book itself we do have quite explicit Shīʿite accounts of its contents, and these are, at least in part, certainly quite similar, and

[1] For additional details on al-Sijistānī see: Rippin, 1965, 2:546-547; on *Al-Maṣāḥif* see: Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1937.
[2] See: Watt, 1960, 1:307-308.
[3] See: Vaglieri, 1986, 3:63-65.
[4] See: Roded, 2000, 10:856.
[5] See: Vadet, 1986, 3:873-875.
[6] See: Rippin, 2000, 10:764-765.
[7] See: Al-Ziriklī, 1986, 4:111.
[8] Further information on the subject can be found, for example, in: Al-Suyūṭī, 1941, 1:102; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, 1937, p. 18; Ibn Kathīr, 1909, Chapters 2 and 3; Al-Ṣāliḥ, 1959, pp. 78-79.
[9] Pickthall, 2000, p. 564.
[10] Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, 2:243; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 8:57, no. 18. Shīʿite sources do not agree as to the person with regard to whom the verse was revealed. According to some traditions that person was Al-Ḥārith b. ʿUmar (see: Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, p. 243; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 8:57, no. 18). Other sources ascribe the revelation as due to the Jew Al-Nuʿmān b. al-Ḥārith who refused to recognize ʿAlī's right to rule after the Prophet had invested him with his authority at Ghadīr Khumm (see: Ibn Shādhān, 1943, p. 79; Al-Nabāṭī, 1964, 1:313, 2:61; Al--Ḥaskānī, 1990, 2:381-385, nos. 1030-1034; Al-Astarābādī, 1988, pp. 697-699; Ibn Ṭāwūs, 1947, p. 460; Al-Kūfī, 1989, pp. 505-506, nos. 505-614). Still other traditions maintain that the verse was revealed on account of a Bedouin who rejected what had been said at Ghadīr (See: Al-Ḥaskānī, 1990, 2:386. Cf. Al-Qummī, 1983, 2:385-387, no. 70).

perhaps identical, with topics treated in the Qurʾān. Some of these topics are: tales of ancient peoples and personalities, legal judgments and laws,[1] warnings and promises of reward and punishment,[2] and descriptions of the Kingdom of heaven and earth.[3] If we add to this the fact that it is the Shīʿite belief that the contents of the book are not only partially overlapping with those of the Qurʾān but, like the Qurʾān, were given to Fāṭima in revelation, then we should not wonder that the Shīʿites, persecuted by the Sunni rulers of the Umayyad[4] (661-750 CE) and Abbasid[5] (750-1258 CE) dynasties, would attempt to hide these aspects of the book from their sworn enemies, in keeping with their overall policy of "dissimulation" (*taqiyya*),[6] which required them to keep silent about many aspects of Shīʿite doctrine, including the nature of "Fāṭima's Book".

As for today, the trend toward rapprochement and coexistence with the Sunni world has caused Shīʿites to claim ignorance about any supposed similarities between "Fāṭima's Book" and the Qurʾān.[7]

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have seen that Twelver Shīʿite Imāms are believed to possess a great number of special attributes, one of these being their possession of what they call "Fāṭima's Book". Shīʿite opinion concerning its revelation is divided. The majority opinion holds that the angel Gabriel revealed it to her over a period of seventy-five days following the death of her father the Prophet Muḥammad, and that he did so in order to alleviate her grief. We also saw that Shīʿite tradition credits the book with containing a great number of topics dealing both with this world and the next, the occult, etc.

We further discussed the books physical aspect and location. It is said to consist of leaves of white pearl, lined with chrysolite, and to be currently in the possession of the twelfth Imām, after having passed from one Imām to the next beginning with the second, Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī.

The Imāms, as we saw, would frequently peruse the book in order to see if a certain name appeared in it as a ruler. And despite Shīʿite claims to the contrary, it is clear from the Shīʿite sources themselves that there were numerous points of similarity between the Qurʾān and "Fāṭima's Book": the

[1] Qurʾānic verses dealing with jurisprudence are known by Muslim scholars by the name of "verses of legal judgment" (*āyāt al-aḥkām*) or "Qurʾānic jurisprudence" (*fiqh al-qurʾān*). Among the topics they deal with are prayer, laws relating to the family, finances, criminal law, laws of war and peace, and social organization.

[2] This can consist of punishment in this world, which can take the shape of loss of possessions, or existing under oppression (cf. Q 24:55, 16:112), as well as rewards and torments in the afterlife.

[3] On the treatment of this topic in the Qurʾān see: Jād al-Ḥaqq, 1980, pp. 162-167.

[4] On the Umayyad dynasty see: Molian, 2000, 10:840-853.

[5] On the Abbasid dynasty see: Lewis, 1960b, 1:15-23.

[6] On the Shīʿite doctrine of dissimulation see: Kohlberg, 1975, pp. 395-402.

[7] See, for example: Al-ʿĀmilī, 1997, p. 115.

book's name (*muṣḥaf*), its source in revelation, some verses and the reasons given for their revelation, as well as certain topics common to the two, such as the history of ancient peoples, laws, warnings and promises of punishment and reward, and descriptions of the kingdom of heaven.

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Abstract

The present study is devoted to a discussion of the bound volume, *muṣḥaf*, of Fāṭima Al-Zahrāʾ (d.632) according to Twelver Shīʿite sources. We shall survey the many traditions concerning the manner of its revelation, as well as its contents, its location, and its use by the Shīʿite Imāms, who also claimed to be able to find in it the names of rulers. In addition, we shall discuss the confusion between the Shīʿite literature of divination (*jafr*) and the *muṣḥaf* of Fāṭima.

The article will also compare the accepted version of the Qurʾān with Fāṭima's *muṣḥaf*. Our study demonstrates that the two have certain points in common, despite the vehement denial of Shīʿites.

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Link between Joshua Bin Nun and ʿAlī Ibn Abū Ṭālib

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Abstract

*This article deals with some aspects of the link between Joshua (Jeshua) Bin Nun and ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, as reflected in the canonical writings of the Shīʿa Islam, which include commentaries on the Qurʾān and the interpretations that proliferated around them, as well as Ḥadīth literature. The Shīʿite writers were influenced by the history of Joshua's life and selected certain details from it for adaptation to the life of ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib, clothing them in Shīʿite dress with the aim of giving ʿAlī an aspect of holiness and also of showing that both ʿAlī and Joshua belonged to those chosen men of high quality, and that the tradition of inheritor to the prophet has existed since ancient times, before the appearance of Shīʿism on the stage of history, so as to give legitimacy to the doctrine of inheritance among the Shīʿa.**

M. Cook believes that it is possible to discover Jewish influences on the schools of Muslim religious law that developed in Iraq, especially on the Imāmiyya Shīʿites,[1] and on this basis one can understand some of the similarities that the Shīʿa adapted from the qualities of Joshua as found in Jewish traditions and applied to ʿAlī. One of the ways which the Shīʿa[2] employed in

* This article is an expanded version of a lecture I delivered at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, at the Nehemiah Levzion Center for Islamic Research, on 26 April 2006, in the framework of the conference on 'Sufism in Israel/Palestine, Past and Present'.

[1] Cook, 1986, pp. 260–270.

[2] The term Shīʿa and Shīʿites in this article refer to the Imāmiyya Shīʿa, who are also called the Twelvers (Ithnā ʿAshariyya).

order to transform the image of ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib (661 CE) into that of a holy person was to promote the link between him and Joshua Bin Nun.

The question arises as to how it was possible to find resemblances between two historical characters that seem so different from each other, between ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib, the cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad and his son-in-law, who is the central character in Shīʿa faith, and Joshua Bin Nun, the servant and inheritor of Moses.

The Shīʿites link Joshua to ʿAlī because both of them are chosen men of high quality who are legendary characters. The Shīʿites believe that ʿAlī is the foremost among those who continue in the line of prophecy, and they stress the continuity of prophecy in order to transfer the legacy, *waṣiyya*, between the prophets and after them from ʾImām to ʾImām in a continuous chain. Listed among those prophets were Noah, Hod, Abraham (Ibrāhīm), Moses (Mūsā), and others. The legacy was passed down in continuous sequence through the inheritors, *ʾawṣiyāʾ*, of the prophets, among whom were listed Seth, Amran (Amram), Shuʿayb (Jethro), Zakhariyyā (Zecharia), Jeshua (Joshua), and ʿAlī.

According to the Shīʿa, Joshua is considered the inheritor who received the legacy of Moses, just as ʿAlī received the legacy of the Prophet Muḥammad. Both ʿAlī and Joshua are therefore the inheritors of prophets who are considered chosen men of high quality who are of legendary character. The Shīʿites selected certain details of the lives of Joshua the Jew and ʿAlī the Muslim and mentioned them in their treatises, adapting them for their readers by clothing them in Shīʿite dress, in order to stress the holy character of ʿAlī.

In my opinion, an additional reason for the Shīʿites' choice of Joshua the inheritor of Moses as the character linked with ʿAlī, is that during the period of Joshua, God delivered the Children of Israel from Egypt. The Shīʿa were influenced by this story of deliverance, which became a source of inspiration for the future. The Shīʿites identified with the people of Israel as a persecuted minority, whose history of suffering was a forecast and symbol for the future of the Shīʿites. Just as their predecessors, the Children of Israel in Egypt, had suffered under Pharaoh and were redeemed, so did their situation improve during the period of ʿAlī.

ʿAlī was the inheritor of the Prophet Muḥammad just as Joshua was the inheritor of Moses, and both of them were gifted with the same qualities. During their lifetimes their people suffered under rulers and both of them brought redemption to their supporters in the community. In addition, it could be seen that the doctrine of the inheritor had existed since ancient times and the Shīʿa was a continuation of this legacy. The Shīʿites went

back thousands of years to show that the roots of Shīʿism were to be found in the distant past, from the times of Joshua and before Shīʿism appeared on the stage of history, in order to prove that the Shīʿa had been in existence since ancient days. All this was to give legitimacy to the doctrine and to the Shīʿa in general, so as to prove its antiquity[3] and that the Shīʿa were not a new sect as people generally thought.

The main principle regarding the resemblances between Joshua and ʿAlī is that a comparative examination of early Shīʿite traditions with Midrashic literature and extracts from Talmudic lore may expose many Israelite traditions that were not formerly regarded as such by researchers,[4] and that found their way into Islam in the early period of its formation. It is commonly accepted to consider the groups of Jewish converts to Islam, mainly of the generation of Muḥammad, as the channel through which these traditions entered Islam.[5]

The Islamic sages were divided over the question of the necessity or value of keeping these traditions, but it seems that the view that began to prevail amongst them, as shown by M. I. Kister, was that there was no harm in allowing Muslim scholars to draw upon Jewish traditions.[6] In any case, the compilers of Qur'ān commentaries and *Ḥadīth* collections were influenced by material of this kind.

Whether their Jewish origins were clearly visible or were incorporated within them, much of this kind of material was collected in treatises of the literary genre of "Tales of the Prophets" (Qiṣaṣ al-'Anbiyā'), consisting mainly of adaptations of rabbinical Midrashim (homiletics) about the biblical prophets. It should be noted that there are traces of Midrashim and sayings from Talmudic literature not only in commentaries on the Qur'ān and in *Ḥadīth* literature and "Tales of the Prophets," but also within the text of the Qur'ān itself, a well-known fact that cannot be elaborated here.

A selection of Shīʿite traditions and sayings that have a Jewish impress upon them were collected by G. Vajda.[7] He came to the conclusion that

[3] This idea of the Shī'a seeing itself as an ancient religion is a central one for the Shī'ites and has even been discussed in various studies: see, for example, Kohlberg 1980, pp. 133–160.

[4] Compare Heinemann 1974, pp. 181–199 and notes on p. 243; see also Lazarus-Yafeh 1992, pp. 23, 105, and 119 n. 29.

[5] On these traditions and the attitude of Islamic sages towards inheritor usage, see Goitein (1935, pp. 89–101).

[6] Kister 1972, pp. 215–239.

[7] For details, see Vajda 1981, pp. 45–53.

most of the sayings that he had collected from the Shīʿite treatise "al-Khāfī" by al-Kulaynī (d. 941), and which had their possible sources in Talmudic literature, also have parallels in outstanding Sunni treatises.

Many Jewish Midrashim have been taken into Shīʿite sources, including numerous exegetical accounts of the story of Joshua, which echo well-known Midrashim. However, the fact that these traditions were found in Shīʿite treatises does not imply that they were the well-known traditions that researchers dealing with *Israʾīliyyāt*, such as A. Geiger, I. Goldziher, H. Speyer and others, were concerned with. There remains important material that is still embedded in ancient texts. In some cases this can be explained by ignorance of the texts, and in other cases the reason is that the Jewish origin is not clearly seen.

In a thorough examination that I made of Shīʿite sources, I found that the Shīʿā stress a number of common traits between Joshua and ʿAlī, apparently taken from Shīʿites who were influenced by the history of Joshua's life and chose certain details which they introduced into their treatises and adapted for their readers by clothing them in Shīʿite dress in order to give ʿAlī the character of a holy man, the descendant of a holy family.

Resemblances between Joshua and ʿAlī

1. Common name

According to the fifth Twelver imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732), ʿAlī had many names, and one of them was Jeshua, a name well known among the philosophers.[8]

2. Appointment as inheritors ('awṣiyā') *of the prophets*

The same Muḥammad al-Bāqir relates that Moses called Joshua Bin Nun and appointed him as his inheritor, but asked him to keep this a secret. The Prophet Muḥammad also appointed ʿAlī as his inheritor.[9]

[8] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, 3:276.

[9] Al-Astarābadī 1988, 3:158; Al-Kulaynī 1946, 1:293 no. 3, 8:117 no. 91; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1992, 4:176 no. 5402; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1983, p. 402 no. 3; Al-Ṭūsī 1993, p. 442 no. 48–991; Al-Ṭabarī 1963, pp. 82–83; Al-Rāwandī 1988a, 2:858; Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī 1983, p. 99 no. 8; Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 2:41, 44, 153; Ibn Shādhān 1943, p. 98; Al-Rāwandī 1988b, 371; Al-Khazzāz 1980, p. 146; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1975, 1:26, 21; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, 1:251.

3. Date of appointment for inheritors of the prophets

Muḥammad al-Bāqir also notes that ʿAlī and Joshua were appointed as inheritors to the prophets on the 18th of Dhū al-Hijja.[10] ʿAlī's appointment as the inheritor to the Prophet was on the same day as Joshua.[11]

4. Age of those appointed as inheritors to the prophets

ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661) relates that Moses was commanded to appoint Joshua as his inheritor when Joshua was seven years old,[12] and the Prophet Muḥammad also appointed ʿAlī as his inheritor when ʿAlī was 10 years old or less.[13] This means that God had predetermined who would be the inheritors of each prophet, and that the prophet was told by God who would be his inheritor and to appoint him already from his childhood.

5. Period of service as inheritors to the prophets

ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Masʿūd (d. 653) notes that ʿAlī served as inheritor to the Prophet Muḥammad for 30 years after his death, and that Joshua also served for 30 years as the inheritor to the Prophet Moses.[14]

[10] It should be noted that the Shīʿites mark this day as blessed and holy, and ascribe to it other important events that they claim occurred on that day, such as Moses crossing the Red Sea, God's rescue of Abraham from the fire, Jesus' appointment of Simon Peter/Simon Cephas (Shamʿūn al-Ṣafā), as his inheritor, Solomon's appointment of 'Aṣaf as his inheritor, and the night journey of the Prophet Muḥammad. According to Sunni sources the night journey took place on the 17th of Ramadan before Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina. Another view is that the night journey of Muhammad took place on the 17th of Rabīʿ al-'Awwal, and a third view is that the night journey took place on the 27th of Rajab: for details, see Ibn al-Jawzī 1988, pp. 221–222. The aim of the Shīʿites here is to show that this date is a holy one that was intended for important events that happened to the prophets or inheritors. Apparently the Shi'ites attribute a high standing and praise to this day that is associated with periods that are much earlier than the existence of the Shi'a, and this high standing was attributed to it after the appointment of ʿAlī as the inheritor of the Prophet on the 18th of Dhū al-Hijja in the 10th year of the Hejira in Ghadīr Khumm; before this date it had no special standing, but retrospectively, the Shīʿites gave it a high standing in order to give legitimacy to the Shi'a and to claim that the Shīʿa had existed since ancient times.

[11] Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 1:316; Al-Ḥillī 1987, pp. 200–201; Al-Kafʿamī 1984, pp. 513, 698, 756; Al-Mufīd 1992a, p. 41; Al-Mufīd 1992b, p. 312.

[12] According to Jewish sources, Joshua was appointed by Moses as his inheritor when he was 40 years old and not at the age of seven as the Shīʿites claim (for details see Josephus 1967, 156:1). It seems to me that the Shīʿites changed the age of Joshua's appointment as inheritor in order to bring it closer to the age at which ʿAlī was appointed so as to create a link between them.

[13] Al-Rāwandī 1988a, 2:888; Al-Ṭabarsī 1982, 1:255; Al-ʿAyyāshī 1960 p. 330 no. 42; Furāt 1989, p. 183 nos. 183–235.

[14] Al-Ṭabarī 1963, p. 277; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1975, 1: 27; Al-Rāwandī 1988a, 2:934; Al-Fattāl 1966, 1:138; Al-Rāwandī 1988b, p. 176. Sunni sources are divided with regard to the

6. Date of their death

The sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), related that ʿAlī was killed with the sword of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam (d. 661 CE) on the 21st of Ramadān in the 40th year of the Hejira. And Shīʿite sources note that on the same day of the month Joshua Bin Nun died,[15] by which they mean to say that the inheritors of the prophets died on the same date.[16]

7. Wives of the prophets rebel against them

It is told in the name of ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Masʿūd (d. 653) that Zipporah, the wife of Moses (daughter of Jethro/Shuʿayb) rebelled against Joshua and went against him claiming her right to rule after the death of Moses. She claimed that she was more suitable than he to rule. Joshua fought against her and won, and took her captive. She was treated well during her captivity and then released. The same thing happened to ʿAlī when he was appointed Caliph in 656 CE. The wife of the Prophet Muḥammad, ʿĀʾisha, daughter of the Caliph ʾAbū Bakr, rebelled against ʿAlī together with a thousand supporters and led the battle of Jamal (557 CE) against him. ʿAlī won and ʿĀʾisha was captured,[17] and ʿAlī also treated her well and released her. Other Shīʿite sources add that the Prophet knew before his death that his wife ʿĀʾisha would rebel against ʿAlī, and he warned her not to do so.

8. Nature weeping over the death of Joshua and ʿAlī

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq related that, on the day Joshua died and the day on which ʿAlī was murdered, under every stone on the face of the earth that was

period of service by Joshua as the inheritor for 27 years. See for example Ibn al-Athīr who claims that this period was 27 years: for details see Ibn al-ʾAthīr (2004, 1:176); while Al-Kisāʾī (1923, 2:242) claims that the period was 40 years.

[15] Ibn Qūlawayh 1977, p. 76 no. 1; Al-Rāwandī 1988a, 2:88; Ibn Abū al-Ḥadīd 1967, 16:30; Ibn Sharāshūb 1959, 3:313; Al-Mufīd 1992c, 2:8; Al-Ṭabarsī 1970, p. 208; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1983, p. 319 no. 4; Al-ʾIrbillī 1961, 1:532; Al-Ḥillī 1987, p. 234.

[16] The Shiʾites also note that the night journey of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascent to heaven took place on that same date. However, Sunni Islam sources are in disagreement about the date of the night journey of the Prophet Muḥammad. According to them this took place on the 17th of Ramadān before the migration of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina. There is also another view that claims the night journey took place on the 17th of Rabīʿ Awwal, and a third opinion is that it took place on the 27th of Rajab (for details see Ibn al-Jawzī, 1988, pp. 221–222). On that same day Jesus ascended to heaven; Moses ben Amram also died on that same date. The aim of the Shīʿites is to show that this date is holy and that important events associated with the prophets or inheritors took place on it.

[17] Al-Ṭabarī 1963, p. 277; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1975, 1:27; Al-Rāwandī 1988a, 2:934; 1988b, 176.

turned over fresh blood was revealed throughout the night until dawn.[18] The aim of the Shīʿites here is to prove that the position and piety of ʿAlī and Joshua were so great that God changed the order of nature when they were killed, and also to raise the status of ʿAlī to that of Joshua.

9. Twelve tribes and twelve imams

Among the points of linkage noted by the Shīʿites (in the Prophet's name) between Joshua and ʿAlī is the number of the tribes of Israel and the number of Shīʿite imams. There were twelve tribes of Israel, the first one being that of Joshua, while the Shīʿite imams (Imāmiya Shīʿa) were also twelve in number, and ʿAlī was the first of the chain of imams.[19] Thus both Joshua and ʿAlī were the first among the twelve tribes and imams.

10. Supporters of Joshua and ʿAlī are members of the true sect

According to Shīʿite sources, the Prophet claimed that the Jewish were divided into 71 sects, 70 destined for hell and one sect destined for paradise — this is the sect that adhered to and followed the way of Joshua Bin Nun. In Shīʿa Islam there is a tradition that says that the Muslim nation was divided into 73 sects; 72 will be in hell and one in paradise, the sect that follows the way of the inheritor to the Prophet Muḥammad, ʿAlī.[20] The aim of this tradition is to show that the way of Joshua and ʿAlī is the true and just way, that each of them leads his congregation in the right way and continues the way of the prophet. Joshua and ʿAlī both continue the way of the true religion, Joshua in the way of Moses and ʿAlī in the way of the Prophet Muḥammad.

11. Meeting between Joshua and ʿAlī

In spite of the large gap in historical time and place between Joshua and ʿAlī, the Shīʿite sources quote ʿAbāya al-Asadī[21] to the effect that ʿAlī met

[18] Ibn Qūlawayh 1977, p. 76 no. 1; Al-Rāwandī 1988b, p. 143 no. 155; Al-Jazāʾirī 1984, p. 419. It should be noted that this motif — the covering up of fresh blood by stones and rocks on the day of murder — is a motif found in Shi'ite literature that relates the murders of ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib and the murder of his son Husayn Ibn Ali. For details, see Sindawi 2000, p. 207 n. 3.

[19] Al-Nīlī 1980, p. 69.

[20] Al-Ṭūsī 1993, pp. 523–524 nos. 1159–1166; Al-Ṭabarī 1963, p. 216; Ibn Qays 1994, p. 803.

[21] His full name: ʿAbāya b. Rabʿī al-Asadī, a companion of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥasan; he transmitted only a few *ḥadīth*s. For more on him see al-Barqī 1963, 5.

Joshua. Joshua was revealed to ʿAlī when he was on his way northwards to Ṣiffīn and crossed the Euphrates River. The mountain opposite him broke open and a man with white hair appeared, saying he was Joshua.[22] The aim here was to say that God causes the inheritors of the prophets to meet each other in spite of the great historical distance between them. ʿAlī's meeting with Joshua when he crossed the river recalled for Shīʿites the story of Joshua crossing the Jordan, and they saw here a suitable place for the meeting between these two figures.

Similar personal qualities

a. Removal of a large rock over a fountain of water originating in paradise

Sahl b. Ḥunayf[23] (d. 658) relates that Joshua and ʿAlī at different times had each overturned a large rock and moved it aside to reveal a fountain of water with its source in paradise and allow his soldiers to drink from it. In Shīʿite tradition the story told about ʿAlī is that during the battle in Ṣiffīn on the Euphrates (657 CE) his soldiers were thirsty and complained to him. ʿAlī then went to a certain place as if he knew it earlier, and asked his men to dig there. They dug until they found a large rock, but could not remove it. Then ʿAlī smiled, bent over the rock, overturned it, and removed it with one hand as if the rock were a ball in his hand. Suddenly, from under the rock, a fountain of pure sweet water burst up, sparkling more than silver, and all his soldiers drank and satisfied their thirst and filled their water bottles. Afterwards ʿAlī replaced the rock and covered it with earth as it was before the digging.

This miracle took place before the eyes of a Christian monk who became a Muslim immediately after seeing what ʿAlī had done and declared that ʿAlī was indeed the inheritor of the Prophet Muḥammad. ʿAlī then asked him how he identified him as the inheritor of the Prophet and the monk answered that he knew this from his father, and his father knew it from his forefathers since the days of the prophet Joshua Bin Nun, the inheritor of Moses. The monk added that his forefathers related that when Joshua Bin Nun fought the Amalekites 40 years after the death of Moses, he passed

[22] Al-Rāwandī 1988a, 2:820.

[23] His full name: Sahl b. Ḥunayf b. Wahb al-Anṣārī al-Awsī Abū Saʿd, a Companion of the Prophet. He was present at the battle of Badr and the Prophet encouraged the relationship between him and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. He died in al-Kūfa. Forty *ḥadīth*s are related in his name in books of *ḥadīth*: see al-Zirkilī 1986, 3:142.

this same place (Ṣiffīn) and his soldiers who were thirsty complained to him. Joshua then told his soldiers: "I swear to you that there is a fountain of water nearby that was brought down from paradise and Adam was the first to discover this fountain." Joshua then got up and overturned a large rock and moved it aside, and a fountain of water burst out. All the soldiers drank from this fountain and filled their bottles, and then Joshua commanded them to return the rock to its place and cover the fountain. He said to his soldiers: "Know that this rock cannot be overturned or moved except by a prophet or the inheritor of a prophet." After he spoke, a group of his soldiers tried to overturn the rock in vain. "After this," added the Christian monk, "the monastery in which I now live was built near this rock." He then told ʿAlī: "Know, O ʿAlī, when you overturned this rock I knew for a certainty that you are the inheritor of the Prophet Muḥammad. The monk who had converted to Islam then joined the soldiers of ʿAlī and fought with them and died in the battle of Nahrawān (658 CE), one of the tributaries of the Tigris, that took place between ʿAlī and the Khārijites.[24]

From this tradition we see that ʿAlī was gifted with supernatural powers as an imam. A Shīʿite imam has magical powers and mythical abilities such as seeing things that ordinary people cannot see. ʿAlī saw the fountain of water under the rock, knew things that other people could not know. The conversion to Islam of the Christian monk through ʿAlī and his recognition of ʿAlī as the inheritor of the Prophet came as a result of his recognition that ʿAlī was the imam who had inherited miraculous powers. It is as though the Shīʿites want to say that even a monk who was a religious Christian recognised the position of ʿAlī as the imam and the inheritor of the Prophet, while some of the Muslims do not recognise him as such.

What is of greater interest to us here is that the Shīʿites create a link between ʿAlī and Joshua and that both of them were gifted with similar qualities — since they were both inheritors of prophets — and when they passed the same place they saw and knew what was hidden. They had supernatural powers and were capable of carrying and moving a very large rock that other people could not move. The miracles that they performed were typical of holy men and emphasised the esteem and honour granted to them by God. God granted them wonderful power and gave them the gift of prophecy.

In my view, the aim of the Shīʿites here is not only to raise the status of ʿAlī to the position of prophet or inheritor to the prophet, but to show that the idea of inheritance, that ʿAlī inherited the position of the Prophet, is

[24] Al-Daylamī 1991, 2:372.

well known since ancient times — from the days of Joshua — and is not something new that was invented by the Shīʿa. All this was with the aim of giving legitimacy to the principle of the heritage of ʿAlī.

b. Joshua and ʿAlī punish the heretics in the same manner

It is told in the name of the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), that after the death of Moses, a group of men came to Joshua. These men believed in one God but did not recognise that Moses was the messenger of God. Joshua then dug two pits near each other and connected them with a large door. He then placed the group of men in one of the pits and lit a fire in the second pit. He asked them to believe that Moses was indeed the messenger of God. When they refused, he left them in the pit until they were smothered and died of the smoke. ʿAlī used the same method of punishment for a group of men who believed in one God but did not believe in the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad. ʿAlī punished them in the same way as Joshua did the unbelievers.[25]

From this tradition we learn that ʿAlī knew about Joshua, and that he was of the same standing as Joshua and tried to copy his behaviour in punishing the men. The aim of the Shīʿite authors here was to show that the inheritors of the prophets were similar in their qualities and in much of their behaviour, and that God apparently wanted this to be so.

c. Joshua and ʿAlī as being the most knowledgeable of their time

Joshua is described in the name of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (d. 687) as possessing the greatest amount of knowledge (*ʾaʿlam al-nās*) of all the people of Israel in his time. ʿAlī is also described as having the most knowledge of all the believers of his time.[26]

d. Joshua and ʿAlī are the first believers in the prophets

According to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās, Joshua was the first to believe in the prophecy of Moses, and ʿAlī was also the first to believe in the prophecy of the Prophet Muḥammad.[27]

[25] Al-Kulaynī 1946, 4:182–183 no. 7, quoted by Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, 2:256; Al-Ḥurr Al–ʿĀmilī 1988, 10:250 no. 13336, 23:269 no. 29548.

[26] Al-Ḥillī 1990, p. 451.

[27] Al-Astarābadī 1988, 619; Ibn Abū al-Ḥadīd 1967, 13: 225; Al-Ḥaskānī 1990, 2:292 no. 924, 2:297 no. 931; Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 3:158; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1979, 1:20 no. 20; Ibn al-Biṭrīq

e. Resemblance made by the Prophet Muḥammad between ʿAlī and Joshua

In order to remind believers that ʿAlī resembled Joshua, the Shīʿites ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad many traditions in which he says that ʿAlī is the Joshua of this people.[28] In one place the Prophet says to ʿAlī: "Your position in relation to me is like the position of Aaron in relation to Moses."[29] This tradition is known as the tradition of value (*hadīth al-manzila*), which is so called because of its determination of the value of the Prophet in comparison with ʿAlī.[30]

f. Reversal of the sun and stopping it by Joshua and ʿAlī

Among the miracles ascribed to Joshua and ʿAlī is the miracle of reversing the path of the sun after it has set and stopping it. The aim of the Shīʿites here is to say that Joshua and ʿAlī are exceptional people whose requests are answered by God, even if they go against the laws of nature.

Asmā' bint ʿUmays[31] (d. 661) and Juwayriyya b. Mushir al-ʿAbdī[32] relate that at the battle of Gibeon, when the enemy was fleeing from the Israelites on the slopes of Beth Horon, the day was already ending and victory was not yet won. Joshua commanded the sun to stop and so it did. In another instance, Joshua reversed the path of the sun and recited the afternoon Minha prayer he had missed.[33] On numerous occasions ʿAlī also reversed the path of the sun that was setting. During the battle of Nahrawān (658 CE), the time for prayer arrived and ʿAlī was busy fighting. The sun had set, so ʿAlī rose and purified his body and spoke incomprehensible words, perhaps in Hebrew. He then called upon his men to pray, and suddenly the sun returned and appeared beyond two mountains, so that ʿAlī and his men

1986, p. 65 no. 77; Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā 1992, p. 260; Al-'Irbillī 1961, 1:83, 89, 323; Al-Ḥillī 1992, pp. 166, 394.

[28] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, 3:90; Al-Rāwandī 1988b, p. 174; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1958, 2:13 no. 30, quoted by Al-Majlisī 1984, 38:112 no. 47; Al-Fattāl 1966, 1:100; Al-Ṭabarī 1963, p. 153; Al-Majlisī 1984, 38:216, 93 no. 7.

[29] Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 1:103, 322; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, 3:252; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq no date, 2:469, no. 30; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1990, p. 325; Furāt 1989, p. 245 nos. 245–330.

[30] For a discussion on this tradition and the Sunni and shīʿite commentary see: Friedmann, 1989, pp. 58–59; Kohlberg 1979, pp. 677–79, 678; Bar Asher 1999, p. 156.

[31] Her full name: Asmā' bint ʿUmays b. Maʿad al-Khathmī, a woman Companion who married Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib and went into exile with him to Ethiopia. After her husband was killed in the Battle of Mu'ta, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq married her, and after he died she was taken as wife by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. For more details on her see al-Tawnajī (2001, 22–23).

[32] A Kūfan who was an associate of the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 675). He was killed by the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who accused him of atheism. For more details on him see al-Kishshī (1929, 397–398 no. 742).

[33] Al-Jazā'irī 1984, p. 313; Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1992, 1:203 no. 608; Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 1:102.

could pray.[34] The sun also returned for ʿAlī in another place called al-Ṣahbā' and also in the battle of Khaybar (628 CE).[35]

g. The appearance of Joshua with the hidden imam

Al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar[36] notes that the hidden imam, Muḥammad, will appear at the end of days in the city of Kūfa in southern Iraq and 27 figures will appear with him, including Moses and Joshua.[37] The aim of this tradition is to create a link between Moses and Joshua and the hidden imam who will appear at the end of days. The Shīʿites want to say here that Joshua is an important figure for the Shīʿa and that he is strongly connected with the Shīʿa, the imam ʿAlī and the hidden imam.

Point of similarity	**Joshua**	**ʿAlī**
Nam	+	+
Appointed to succeed a prophet	+	+
Age of appointment to prophet's successor	+	+
Period of office as prophet's successor	+	+
Date of death: 21 Ramaḍān	+	+
Prophet's wife rebels against them	+	+
Nature cries over their deaths	+	+
Twelve tribes and twelve imams	+	+
Supporters of Joshua and ʿAlī are the true believers	+	+

Table I: Points of similarity between ʿAlī and Joshua

Common trait	**Joshua**	**ʿAlī**
Uprooting a large rock and moving it from above a spring emanating from the Garden of Eden	+	+
Same way of punishing infidels	+	+
The most knowledgeable in their times	+	+
First believers in the prophets	+	+
Turning back the sun and stopping its motion	+	+

Table II: Similar personal traits

[34] Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq 1992, 1:204 no. 611; Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 1:201.

[35] Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 1:202.

[36] His full name: al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Juʿfī Abū ʿAbd Allāh, also called Abū Muḥammad al-Juʿfī, a Kūfan *mawlā* who transmitted sayings in the name of the sixth and seventh imams (Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799)). For details see al-Barqī 1963, 34; al-Najāshī 1986, 416 no. 112.

[37] Al-Mufīd 1992c, 2:386; Al-Bayāḍī 1964, 1:254; Al-Ṭabarsī 1970, p. 464; Al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, 2:32 no. 90; Al-Fattāl 1966, 2:266; Al-'Irbillī 1961, 2:466.

Summary

What has been said above is an attempt to point out the link between Joshua and ʿAlī Ibn Abū Ṭālib. We saw that a link and an identity can be shown between the two figures. Joshua (Jeshua) is the inheritor of Moses and the leader of the Israelites after the death of Moses. In spite of the historical gap between the figures of Joshua and ʿAlī, the Shīʿites created a strong link between the two, and pointed out many similar characteristics between them: this is because the Shīʿites believe that every prophet has an inheritor, that the inheritors of the prophets had similar qualities, and that the prophets and their inheritors form a continuous chain from Adam down to ʿAlī. Just as Joshua was the inheritor of Moses, so ʿAlī was the inheritor of Muḥammad. Therefore similar qualities were ascribed to them, and the similarities exceeded the differences, beginning with their superior abilities and ending with inheritor personal traits. All this was aimed at showing that both Joshua and ʿAlī are exceptional figures and that the doctrine of the inheritor (*waṣī*) to the prophet has existed since ancient times, before the Shīʿa appeared on the stage of history, so as to give legitimacy to the doctrine of inheritance among the Shīʿa, as well as legitimacy to the Shīʿa themselves.

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The Prophet Ṣāliḥ and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib

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Abstract

In this paper we compare the prophet Ṣāliḥ and his she-camel with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, in light of various Shīʿite sources such as "stories of the prophets", ḥadīth literature, Islamic jurisprudence and Qurʾān exegesis. In Shīʿite lore the great chronological gap between the two is ignored, and ʿAlī is depicted as possessing many of Ṣāliḥ's attributes, out of a desire to bolster the former's status and endow his personality with sanctity. ʿAlī is thus represented as partaking of the prophet Ṣāliḥ's distinguished characteristics and, just like him, is of holy progeny. Shīʿite writers used the connection between the two personalities in order to convince doubters of ʿAlī's right to the Imamate, to demonstrate that his status is no less than that of a prophet, and to prove the antiquity of the Shīʿite creed.

Keywords: the prophet Ṣāliḥ, Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Imām, succession (*wilāya*), authority (*waṣiyya*).

Introduction

According to the Shīʿite view every prophet has an executor (*waṣiyy*), and that the Imāms are the inheritors of the prophets and their executors.[1] This inheritance was passed on in unbroken succession from one prophet and executor to another, until it reached the Prophet Muḥammad, who bequeathed it to the Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, from whom it passed on again in succession until the twelfth Imām.

[1] For more details on this issue see, for example: Rubin 1979, pp. 41–65.

Shīʿism has taken numerous biographical details in the lives of the prophets and their executors and ascribed them to the Imāms, in order to turn the latter into holy men and to convince the believers of their right to the succession of the Imamate. To take just a few examples, numerous attributes and biographical details belonging to ʿĪsā (Jesus),[2] and also to the prophet Yaḥyā (John the Baptist),[3] have been transferred to al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, while characteristics originally ascribed to Joshua Bin Nun, Moses' "executor", have been transferred to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, despite the vast chronological gulf which separates the prophets and their executors from the Shīʿite Imāms.

In fact, the Shīʿa claims that its roots go back thousands of years into the past. The attribution of similar or identical characteristics to ancient prophets and more recent Imāms serves as evidence for its antiquity and for the validity of its creed of succession. Shīʿism, in its own view, thus existed long before it appeared on the stage of history, despite the more accepted contrary opinion.

Another possible motive for claiming that the Imāms have inherited the succession of the prophets and their executors can be traced to the struggle against injustice and falsehood which was the main mission of the prophets and executors, and which the twelve Imāms continued. The Imāms are thus conceived as engaged in the same divine revolutionary activities as God's prophets and messengers, for the purpose of establishing social justice. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, as an Imām and the executor of the Prophet Muḥammad, is deemed the inheritor of the prophets' way and their justice. Since he epitomizes the struggle for righteousness and the fight against injustice, it is no wonder that he is compared with the prophet Ṣāliḥ, with whom he has much in common.

A comparison of the prophet Ṣāliḥ with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib can shed light on an important issue, to wit the extent to which the traditions of ancient Shīʿism were derived from "stories of the prophets", a genre which provided a rich source of attributes of prophets which were unabashedly reformulated as attributes of the twelve Imāms.

Numerous examples of this can be seen in the Imāms' biographies as reported in various Shīʿite sources. However, so far this issue has received only very scant and superficial scholarly attention.

The present study focuses on the similarities between the story of the prophet Ṣāliḥ and the miracle of his she-camel, and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, as

[2] For more details see our study: Sindawi 2007, pp. 44, 50–65.
[3] For more details see our study: Sindawi 2004b, pp. 78 (3), 37–54.

found in Shīʿite sources, especially in the "stories of the prophets" literature, collections of traditions, and contemporary studies.

The main sources used for this study are the following: *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* by al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/902); *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshi* by al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 320/932); *al-Khiṣāl* and *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991); *ʿArāʾis al-majālis* by al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035); *al-Tahdhīb* by al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067); *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* by al-Bayāḍī al-Nabbāṭī (d. 877/1472); *Biḥār al-anwār* by al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1698); *Qiṣaṣ wa-mawālid al-anbiyāʾ* by al-Kisāʾī (d. 1234/1818); *The Divine Guide in Early Shīʿism* by Amir Moezzi. Before we proceed to examine the similarities between the two personalities, a short introduction to the story of the prophet Ṣāliḥ is in order.

A brief account of the story of the prophet Ṣāliḥ[4]

When Ṣāliḥ attained the age of forty God he was inspired by God to call on the tribe of Thamūd to obey God. But the people of Thamūd said to him that if he wanted to be believed he should bring a pregnant she-camel out of a rock and have it give birth to a young camel. Ṣāliḥ prayed to God, whereupon the rock split and from it emerged a very large, well-proportioned she-camel which kneeled before them and gave birth to a large camel like its mother. Ṣāliḥ then asked his people to divide their water so that they would have it one day, and the she-camel the next day. On the day of the she-camel they had enough to drink from its milk, but on their day the she-camel did not get any water. They then begrudged the she-camel also what it drank on its own day and conspired to kill it. The person chosen to carry out their plan was Qudār b. Sālif. The she-camel was killed and on the fourth day God's punishment was visited on them; the people were all killed and Ṣāliḥ's she-camel (also known as "God's she-camel" or "the first she-camel")[5] was resurrected. In the wake of this affair the killer's name

[4] The story of the prophet Ṣāliḥ appears in the Qur'ān in a number of places, as follows:
A. God sends the prophet Ṣāliḥ to his people: Q 7:73, 73; 11:61; 26:141–145, 146–151; 27:45–47.
B. Ṣālīḥ's people do not believe in his message: Q 7:75–76; 11:62–63; 26:153–154.
C. The she-camel sent as a miracle to Ṣāliḥ from heaven: 7:73; 11:64; 17:59; 26:154–156; 54:27-28; 91:11-13.
D. The she-camel is killed and the people of Thamūd are punished: 7:77-79; 11:65–68; 25:38–39; 26:156–158; 27:29–31; 69:4–5; 85:17–20; 89:9–14; 91:11–15.
The story of Ṣāliḥ appears in numerous other sources as well, such as the "stories of the prophets", historical chronicles, and more.

[5] For more details on the she-camel's epithets see, for example: al-Thaʿālibī 1977, 29, 45, 352.

entered proverbial usage as an example for misfortune, calamity and extinction.[6]

The similarities between the stories of the prophet Ṣāliḥ and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib

A careful examination of Shīʿite sources reveals a number of attributes which the two share. In all likelihood Shīʿite authors perused the prophet Ṣāliḥ's biography, which they found to contain details which could be reformulated so as to fit in with the beliefs of the Shīʿite public and enhance the aura of sanctity surrounding ʿAlī as a member of a sacred family.

Before discussing these similarities in detail, we should note that in addition to the likeness between Ṣāliḥ and ʿAlī, there are also similarities between Ṣāliḥ's she-camel and ʿAlī. We found eight points of similarity between the two men, and seven between the camel and ʿAlī, as will be explained in the following pages.

The similarities between ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ

A) Miracles associated with their birth

When Zaghwa, the mother of the prophet Ṣāliḥ, became pregnant, a number of omens appeared on land and on sea. When he was born, on a Friday night in the month of Muḥarram, there was a great tumult in the desert and the mountains; angels descended and wild beasts, lions and rid-

[6] Among the proverbs alluding to Ṣāliḥ's she-camel are the following: "more ill-omened than Aḥmar of ʿĀd" or "more ill-omened than Aḥmar of Thamūd", where Aḥmar refers to Qudār b. Sālif, the she-camel's killer, who at times is also called by his mother's name Qudayra. He is depicted as an anti-hero, whose egoism and his love for his own person and his narrow interests drove him to kill the she-camel with the ensuing destruction. For more details on these proverbs see, for example: al-Aṣbahānī, no date, 247, no. 339; al-Maydānī, no date, 2:187, no. 2031; al-Shībī 1982, 491, no. 301; al-Zamakhsharī 1381/1962, 1:176, no. 722; al-ʿAskarī 1988, 1:456, no. 1034; al-Yūsī, no date, 3:211; al-Aṣfahānī, 1988, 212, no. 289. A well-known saying is "I did not kill Ṣāliḥ's she-camel", said by a person who protests his innocence; see al-Thaʿālibī 1977, 352.

The following are some of the proverbs which allude to the young camel born to Ṣāliḥ's she-camel: "They were afflicted by the she-camel's frothing daughter", "it was for them like the she-camel's frothing daughter", "it was for them like the frothing young camel". These are used to refer to someone who brings death and misfortune to others, like the newly-born camel which after its mother was killed went up a mountain and frothed, bringing God's punishment down on Thamūd. For more details on such proverbs see, for example: al-Sadūsī 1391/1971, 44, no. 8; al-Bakrī 1983, 458, no. 215; al-Maydānī no date, 3:20, no. 20; al-Zamakhsharī 1381/1962, 2:211, no. 713.

ing animals prostrated themselves and thanked God. The idols of the tribe of Thamūd fell on their faces.[7]

Similarly, when Fāṭima the daughter of Asad (d. 626 CE), the mother of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 CE), was pregnant the ground shook under the tribe of Quraysh for seven days, rocks were flattened, and the idols were scattered and fell on their faces.[8] When ʿAlī was born, so it is related, the skies were radiant and the stars shone twice as brightly as before.[9]

B) The two men's physical similarity

The prophet Ṣāliḥ is described as bearded. It is related of him that after the she-camel was killed he was so beset with grief that his tears flowed down his cheeks and beard.[10] According to another tradition he is described as possessing a heavy beard.[11] ʿAlī, too, has been described as having a large beard which covered his chest.[12]

The prophet Ṣāliḥ is described as of medium height;[13] the same is true of ʿAlī.[14]

It is as if the Shīʿite sources wanted to tell us that God made Imāms similar to prophets in many respects, including their physical characteristics.

C) A radiant face

The prophet Ṣāliḥ's face is depicted as radiating light. No one could look at his face, so radiant was his beauty;[15] ʿAlī's face is also said to have been radiant.[16]

[7] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, pp. 89–90.
[8] Al-Fattāl 1966, 1:78; Al-Qummī 1363/1943, p. 56.
[9] Ibid.
[10] al-Ashrafānī 2001, p. 97.
[11] Al-Rāwandī 1418/1997, p. 103, part 4, *ḥadīth* no. 91.
[12] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā 1408/1988, p. 108, *ḥadīth* no. 55.
[13] Al-Rāwandī 1418/1997, p. 103.
[14] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā 1408/1988, p. 108, *ḥadīth* no. 55.
[15] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, p. 91.
[16] The light emanating from the faces of the Imāms is an important issue among Shīʿites, who believe that God created the Prophet Muḥammad and his descendants the Imāms out of His light (see: al-Kulaynī 1365/1945, 1:389, no. 1; 1:402, no. 5; 1:440, no. 3; 1:442, no. 10; 1:531, no. 6; al-Ṣaffār, 1404/1983, p. 20, no. 3; al-Daylamī 1412/1991, 2:404). According to Shīʿite tradition God created seventy-thousand angels out of the light of ʿAlī's face. These angels will intercede on his and his admirers' behalf on the Day of Resurrection (see: al-Daylamī 1412/1991, 20:234-235), and that the heavens were also created from the light of ʿAlī (see: al-Daylamī 1412/1991, 2:403).

D) Extensive knowledge

It is said of the prophet Ṣāliḥ that God gave him much knowledge and dignity.[17] ʿAlī, too, like all the Imāms, was knowledgeable; in fact, Shīʿites claim that he was the "most erudite of men" (*aʿlam al-nās*),[18] whose knowledge was at least the equal of that of the angels and the prophets,[19] if not superior to theirs, for he was able to renew and increase his knowledge,[20] so that nothing remained hidden from him.[21]

E) They understood the language of animals

Like Solomon, the prophet Ṣāliḥ is said to have spoken to animals. When he called on his people to obey God they are reported to have asked him to call on the lions to testify that he was to be believed, whereupon Ṣāliḥ raised his voice and addressed the lions as follows: "Oh lions, if I am the messenger of God to the people of Thamūd, come to me with the permission of God Almighty". Then a huge lion appeared and said: "I am at your service, oh messenger of God". A man of Thamūd accused him of being a sorcerer; the lion then turned towards the people of Thamūd and gave such a roar that they all ran into their homes and begged Ṣāliḥ to make the lion go away. Ṣāliḥ gestured to the lion and he left them.[22]

In this tale Ṣāliḥ's call to the lion is answered immediately. He calls the lion in the latter's language. The lion does not harm him; in fact, it roars at his enemies and obeys his orders.

ʿAlī, too, is said to have known the language of the beasts. In fact, Shīʿītes believe that their Imāms know the languages of all people and all other creatures as well.[23] It is therefore not to be wondered at that ʿAlī is depicted as speaking to animals, including lions. Al-Ḥārith al-Aʿwar[24] relates that he was in a place called Kunāsa[25] together with the Commander of the Faithful and a group of people when suddenly a lion appeared. The people took

[17] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, 91.

[18] Al-Ṣadūq 1403/1983, 62, no. 9, whence al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 25:116, no. 1.

[19] Al-Ṣaffār 1404/1983, 109, no. 2.

[20] Amir Moezzi 1994, pp. 71–72.

[21] Al-Majlisī 1404/1983, p. 26, chapter 6: "the knowledge of heaven and earth, Paradise and the Fire was not concealed from them".

[22] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, p. 93.

[23] Lobenstein 2003, p. 218.

[24] For details on him see: al-Ṭūsī 1415/1994, 94, no. 927-3; al-Ḥillī 1411/1990, 54, no. 8; al-Kishshī 1348/1929, pp. 88–89, no. 142–192.

[25] The name of a place in the city of Kūfa; for more details see: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī 1399/1989, 4:481, s.v. "Kunāsa".

fright and ran while the lion went up to ʿAlī and stood before him. ʿAlī than placed his hand on the lion's head and spoke to him as follows: "Go back whence you came, God willing, do not enter the House of the Hijra (= Kūfa) after today, and tell all the lions in my name that they should not do so either".[26] After ʿAlī finished speaking the lion went away and disappeared.

In this tradition we see that the lion recognizes ʿAlī and behaves towards him in a distinctly un-lion-like manner. He understands what ʿAlī says to him and obeys him. The Imām is here represented as mediating between the animal and human worlds, thanks to his knowledge of the languages of each. The tradition also lets us know that an Imām's authority is not limited to mankind but extends to beasts as well.

F) A terrible roar in battle when danger looms

Of the prophet Ṣāliḥ it is said that he had a loud, fear-inspiring roar which he would use when facing the enemy in battle. His roar instilled terror in his enemies' hearts.

Shīʿite sources relate that there was a man descended from Shem, son of Noah, who attacked the people of Thamūd every seven years and took their possessions, until Ṣāliḥ came and gave a great roar, which so frightened the enemy that he fled and left the booty he had already taken.[27]

On another occasion Ṣāliḥ roared at his own people, who refused to believe in his mission and would not obey God. They fled from him in terror.[28] ʿAlī, interestingly enough, is reported to have had an impressive roar, too, which he used under circumstances very similar to those in which Ṣāliḥ used his.

It is related, for example, that the Prophet once sent ʿAlī to the city of Amman to fight al-Julandī b. Karkara (or Karkar). A fierce battle between them ensued, in the course of which al-Julandī promised a youth by the name of al-Kindī that if he managed to capture ʿAlī he would receive his daughter in marriage. Al-Kindī rode a white elephant and, in the company of thirty other elephants, attacked ʿAlī. When they approached him ʿAlī descended from his she-mule, walked up to a she-elephant and began to speak to it in a language which no human could understand. The moment he did this twenty-nine elephants turned around, attacked the pagan army

[26] Al-Rāwandī no date, 1:191–192.
[27] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, p. 93.
[28] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, pp. 93–94.

and drove it back to the gates of Amman. The she-elephant spoke to ʿAlī and said to him: "We all believe in you and in the Prophet Muḥammad, except for this white elephant which al-Kindī is riding". ʿAlī then produced his well-known roar, and the white elephant was immobilized with fear. This enabled ʿAlī to cut off the elephant's head with his sword, and to capture al-Kindī.[29]

This is not the place to discuss the numerous significant details contained in this tradition. Here we shall only mention ʿAlī's fear-inspiring roar which he used in battle, just as Ṣāliḥ did. It would seem that this was not deemed to be a normal human roar, but rather one of a special kind, granted by God to His prophets and Imāms for the purpose of instilling fear in the hearts of unbelievers who wished to do harm to God's messengers and rejected their mission.

G) Feeding the people

The prophet Ṣāliḥ's she-camel provided the people with beneficial milk;[30] ʿAlī, on the other hand, provided his people with beneficial knowledge and wisdom.[31]

H) Their place of burial

The location of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's grave is a matter of some dispute.[32] However, all Shīʿite sources are agreed that he is buried in al-Gharī, the site in the city of al-Najaf where his shrine is located. Shīʿites consider this location certain beyond doubt; Shīʿite sources explain that before his death ʿAlī told his sons: "Bury me in this soil, in the tomb of my brothers Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, may they rest in peace".[33]

Numerous traditions relate that ʿAlī's grave in al-Gharī contained the mortal remains of a number of prophets, among them Ṣāliḥ and Abraham.[34]

According to one tradition the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq stated that "when ʿAlī was put in his grave it was empty, and a loud voice was heard saying 'Verily the

[29] Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1379/1959, 2:311, whence al-Majlisī, 1404/1983, 41:77–78, *ḥadīth* no. 8; al-Nabāṭī, 1384/1964, 1:97-98.

[30] Al-Kisā'ī, 1424/2004, 99; al-Jazā'irī, 1420/1999, 155; al-Ṭabrisī, 1415/1995, 5:299.

[31] Al-Qummī, 1404/1983, 2:132; al-Jazā'irī, 1420/1999, 152; al-Majlisī, 1404/1983, 11:54, within *ḥadīth* no. 31.

32 For more information on this dispute, see Sindāwī, 2002–2003, pp. 126 ff.; Sindawi 2004a, pp. 2, 21–49.

[33] Al-Jazā'irī 1420/1999, 92; al-Ṭūsī 1995, 6:33, no. 66; al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 11:379, no. 4

[34] Al-Nabbāṭī 1384/1964, 3:122.

Commander of the Faithful was a worthy servant; therefore God joined him to His prophet, and so He shall do with the executors, so that even if a prophet should die in the Orient and his executor in the Occident, He shall join him'". ʿAlī is considered the Prophet Muḥammad's executor, and his tomb is thus deemed to serve as a burial place for prophets and their executors.

Another tradition has the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732 CE) say: "No prophet was ever sent except with our authority and with the disavowal of our enemy". In other words, the Shīʿites believe that the prophet Ṣāliḥ was acquainted with the Imām ʿAlī, and the other Imāms as well.[35] It is also part of the Shīʿite creed that an Imām can make contact with deceased prophets, whom they visit and who also visit them.[36]

Thus ʿAlī, who was able to contact all the prophets, would also naturally have been in contact with Ṣāliḥ, and would have known, according to Shīʿite belief, that he would be buried in the same grave.

Here again we see the Shīʿite tendency to link its own appearance with events in the far past, thus providing its creed a venerable antiquity. Ṣāliḥ knows that ʿAlī will be buried with him in the same grave, and so indirectly provides proof of the existence of Shīʿism and its creed in the remote past. Another purpose of this tradition is to show that ʿAlī's tomb in al-Gharī is an extraordinary site. This is the superficial meaning; these traditions also possess a deeper inner meaning, namely the spiritual link between ʿAlī and the prophet Ṣāliḥ.

In contrast to these Shīʿite traditions, some Sunnī traditions place ʿAlī's grave in Mecca,[37] near the Black Stone;[38] others say that it is to be found in the land of Hadramawt east of Yemen,[39] and still others locate it in al-Ramla.[40]

I) Both ride a she-camel in Paradise

The attributes common to ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ, according to the Shīʿa, are not limited to aspects of their earthly lives, but extend to the Day of Resurrection as well, where the two will meet. During their lifetimes they never met, since they lived many ages apart, but according to Shīʿite belief on the Day of Resurrection they will both ride in the same convoy. On that day

[35] Al-ʿAyyāshī 1380/1960, 2:258; al-Ṣaffār 1404/1983, pp. 74–74, *ḥadīth* no. 1–9.
[36] al-Ṣaffār 1404/1983, p. 278, no. 12; Amir-Moezzi 1994, pp. 72–73.
[37] Ibn Kathīr 1985, p. 127; al-Thaʿlabī no date, 63.
[38] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2004, 64.
[39] Al-Ṭabrisī 1411/1990, 7:392; al-Ashrafānī 2001, p. 99.
[40] Al-Kisāʾī 1424/2004, p. 102. It should be noted that there are a number of shrines dedicated to the prophet Ṣāliḥ in the Holy Land, in al-Ramla, Acre, and elsewhere as well. For details see, ʿArrāf 1993, pp. 118–122.

they will also share a number of attributes. For example, both will ride she-camels. According to one tradition the Prophet is reported to have said: "Only four will ride on the Day of Resurrection, myself, ʿAlī, āṭima and Ṣāliḥ; I will ride al-Burāq, Fāṭima my daughter will ride al-ʿAḍbā' (the Prophet's she-camel),[41] Ṣāliḥ will ride God's murdered she-camel, and ʿAlī will ride a she-camel from Paradise, made of light, whose halter is made of sapphire, and he will wear two green garments".[42]

According to this tradition the two will meet in Paradise, as part of the foursome Muḥammad, Fāṭima, ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ, whose exceptional status is symbolized by the fact that only they will ride on that day, in contrast to all other prophets and executors.

However, of the four, ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ appear to have the same standing, since they will ride in the same convoy. In other words, ʿAlī is deemed to have the same rank as the best prophets.

The similarities between ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ's she-camel

Before enumerating the common attributes of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel and ʿAlī, it should be pointed out that the Shīʿa found numerous incidents, expressions and miracles in the stories about this she-camel, which made it very popular among the believers of all times and therefore engendered a tendency to endow ʿAlī with similar attributes. The message behind this comparison is that ʿAlī himself is one of God's miracles, just like Ṣāliḥ's she-camel.

A) Place of birth

According to Shīʿite sources ʿAlī was born inside the Kaʿba, the Rock of God. For this reason he is called "Born of the Kaʿba" by the Shīʿites, since no other prophet or executor had this honor.[43] In this he is similar to Ṣāliḥ's she-camel which, as we saw above, came fully-grown and pregnant out of a rock at the request of the people of Thamūd.[44]

[41] Al-ʿAḍbā' was one of the Prophet's she-camels; for more details see: Ibn al-Jawzī 1408/1988, p. 590.

[42] Al-Jazā'irī 1420/1999, p. 93; al-Ṣadūq 1403/1982, p. 204, no. 20; al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 11:380, no. 6; al-Ṣadūq 1983, p. 361, no. 14.

[43] For more details on ʿAlī's birth in the hollow of the Kaʿba see, for example: al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 35:7-9, *ḥadīth* no. 8–11; al-Jazā'irī 1420/1999, p. 91; al-Fattāl 1966, 1:76–77; al-Karājukī, 1410/1989, 1:255.

[44] Al-Jazā'irī, 1420/1999, p. 154; al-ʿAyyāshī, 1380/1960, 2:20, no. 54; al-Majlisī, 1404/1983, 11:377, no. 3.

B) Foreknowledge of death

Prophets have knowledge of the occult, as do the Shīʿite Imāms, as shown, for example, by the traditions in which the prophet Ṣāliḥ predicts the she-camel's death, and in fact describes its killer to his people to warn them that that person would be the cause of their destruction.[45]

In the case of ʿAlī, too, his death was foretold by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muḥammad, who informed ʿAlī that he would be killed by a scoundrel who made others wretched as well, by the name of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam al-Murādī; the Prophet also gave a description of the man.[46] According to one account ʿAlī shared this knowledge with Umm Jaʿfar, his concubine, while she poured water on his hands. He then took hold of his beard, brought it up to his nose, and addressed it as follows: "Woe on you, for you shall be colored by blood on Friday", and indeed he was struck before Friday was over.[47] The identities of both murderers, that of the she-camel and that of ʿAlī, were known beforehand by Ṣāliḥ and ʿAlī respectively.

The reader may well wonder, if both Ṣāliḥ and ʿAlī knew the identity of the killers, why did they not take any steps to prevent the murders? Certainly Shīʿite writers were aware of this problem. Two answers are given to this question. According to one, both deaths were preordained by God, whose will could not be changed. Another answer was that ʿAlī's martyrdom had a sublime purpose and as a result ʿAlī had an exalted position in Paradise; therefore he did nothing to prevent his own murder. As for Ṣāliḥ, he did not take any steps to prevent the killing of the she-camel so that his people would deserve to be destroyed by God as punishment for their deed.

C) Incitement to kill ʿAlī and the prophet Ṣāliḥ's she-camel

Another similarity between ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ's she-camel is the fact that in both cases it was a woman who incited to killing. In ʿAlī's case the inciter was a woman named Quṭām bint al-Akhḍar al-Taymiyya, whose father and brother had been killed by ʿAlī in the Battle of Nahrawān. This beautiful woman was the betrothed of her cousin ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam (d. 661 CE), to whom she said: "I shall not marry unless you give me three thou-

[45] Al-Thaʿlabī no date, pp. 41–43.

[46] Al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 11:376, 393, 18:141, 27:52, no. 3; 28:58-59, 31:439, 31:440, 32:216, 35:61, 42:190, chapter 126, *ḥadīth* no. 1, 42:193–194, no. 10, 42:195, no. 13, 42:198, no. 17, 42:23, 42:238; al-Ḥillī 1408/1987, 237-238; al-Kūfī 1415/1994, p. 919; al-Irbillī 1381/1961, 1:428, 1:434; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1379/1959, 1:141, 3:111, 209.

[47] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā 1408/1988, p. 106, *ḥadīth* no. 44.

sand, a slave and a maid, and you kill ʿAlī". ʿAbd al-Raḥmān agreed to her demands.

As for the killing of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, according to one tradition two women were behind that act, Ṣadūq bint al-Muḥayyā who offered herself to Miṣdaʿ b. Mihraj and ʿUnayza, an old woman who offered one of her daughters to Qudār b. Sālif. In another tradition Kaʿb al-Aḥbār explains that a woman named Malkā caused the she-camel's death. This woman was the queen of Thamūd. When Ṣāliḥ's father became head of the tribe she was jealous. She then approached a woman named Quṭām, who was the lover of Qudār b. Sālif, and another woman named Qibāl, who was the lover of Miṣdaʿ. The queen met with the two women every night and they all drank wine. One evening Malkā said to the two women: "If Qudār and Miṣdaʿ come to you tonight do not submit to them. Instead say to them that the queen is sad because of the she-camel and because of Ṣāliḥ, and that you will not submit to them until they kill the she-camel". When the two men came the two women said to them what they had agreed to say. The men answered: "We will see to it that it is killed". They then left, with seven companions. They lay in wait for the she-camel as it stepped out of the water. Qudār hid beneath a rock that was on its way, and Miṣdaʿ hid beneath another. When the she-camel passed by Miṣdaʿ he shot an arrow which hit its thigh. Then ʿUnayza came out and ordered her daughter, who was very beautiful, to unveil her face before Qudār and play music for him, whereupon he charged the she-camel with his sword, lay bare its hamstring and killed it.[48]

Despite differences among the traditions concerning the killing of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, clearly according to all accounts a woman was the prime mover in both events. The connection is even closer: according to one tradition the name of the woman who called for killing Ṣāliḥ's she-camel was Quṭām, the same name as the woman who wanted ʿAlī killed. The identical names are surely no coincidence.

Quṭām bint al-Akhḍar is mentioned in numerous historical sources, and was in all likelihood a real person. As for the Quṭām associated with the killing of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, it would appear that Shīʿite sources inserted her name in order to enhance the similarities between that event and the killing of ʿAlī, as further proof for the Shīʿite believers of the legitimacy of ʿAlī's rights as Imām and successor of the Prophet.

[48] Al-Jazā'irī 1420/1999, pp. 156–157; al-Ṭabrisī 1415/1995, 2:442–443; al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 11:391–393.

The motif of the woman inciting to kill ʿAlī in Shīʿite sources is probably connected, not only to the story of Ṣāliḥ, but also to the death of John the Baptist, who was killed by Herod at the urging of Salome at a drinking party, and she in turn was incited by her own mother Herodia.[49]

D) The killer depicted as a scoundrel

Shīʿite sources depict both ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam, ʿAlī's killer, and Qudār b. Sālif, who killed Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, as the most wretched of men. According to tradition, the Prophet Muḥammad told ʿAlī on a number of occasions that "the most wretched of the men of yore was the killer of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, and the most wretched of the men of latter days is the man who will strike you with his sword, kill you, and make your blood flow down your beard".[50]

In one tradition Ibn ʿAbbās is quoted to the effect that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam, ʿAlī's murderer, was a descendant of Qudār b. Sālif who killed Ṣāliḥ's she-camel.[51] ʿAlī's killer is described in a number of traditions as either "more wretched than the killer of Ṣāliḥ's she camel" or "the most wretched of the wretched".[52]

E) The time of death and the murderers' punishment

The people of Thamūd killed Ṣāliḥ's she-camel on a Thursday. After the deed was done Ṣāliḥ told them: "Enjoy the next three days,[53] Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The people's punishment then came on the morning of the fourth day, Sunday.[54] The angel Gabriel first came down and gave such a fearful shout that they all died. Then God sent down fire which burned them all.[55]

ʿAlī, too, was struck down on a Thursday. After the deed he was taken and imprisoned. He died of his wounds after three days, on Sunday night.

[49] Sindawi 2004b, p. 42.

[50] Al-Ṣadūq 1387/1958, 1:295, 297; al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 42:190, *ḥadīth* no. 1, 10:227, 11:376, 31:440, 42:190, no. 1; al-Jazāʾirī 1420/1999, 151; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1367/1947, 3; al-Ṣadūq 1983, 95; Ibn Abū al-Ḥadīd no date, 10:265; al-Ḥākim *no date*, 2:434, no. 1108–1196; al-Ḥillī, 1408/1987, 236–238; Ibn Qūlawayh 1399/1977, p. 263; al-Qummī, 1363/1943, p. 57; al-Ṣadūq 1397/1976, pp. 79, 110, no. 101; al-Kūfī 1415/1995, pp. 798, 919; al-Irbillī 1381/1961, 1:427, p. 435; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1379/1959, 1:140, 3:111, 309.

[51] Al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 42:237–238.

[52] Al-Rāwandī no date, 1:182; al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl* 2:576, 607.

[53] Q 11:65.

[54] Al-Ṭabrisī 1415/1995, 5:298–299.

[55] Al-Ṭabrisī 1415/1995, 5:299.

His murderer, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam was punished by having his hands and feet cut off. He was then thrown into a pit filled with petroleum and set afire.[56]

To sum up, in both cases the act took place on a Thursday, the punishment came three days later, in the form of fire.

F) The son killed

Another point of similarity between the stories of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel and ʿAlī is the killing of the son. In the case of ʿAlī, his son al-Ḥusayn was killed at the battle of Karbalā' in the year 680 CE, and the she-camel's offspring, too, was killed by the people of Thamūd after they had killed its mother.

The reader may wonder why such an association was made between ʿAlī and a she-camel. We must remember that according to the Shīʿīte view this camel was a miracle from heaven, which God produced for Ṣāliḥ with the purpose of convincing his people to believe in Him. The same is true of ʿAlī, who was, so Shīʿites believe, a "sign of God" (*āyat Allāh*), made manifest through His Prophet. ʿAlī himself is quoted more than once as saying "Is there a sign greater than me?".[57] The connection between the two thus came quite naturally.

Conclusion

In the previous pages we have examined a number of similarities between ʿAlī and the prophet Ṣāliḥ. The Shīʿa, in its striving to glorify the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, found various appropriate materials in the biographies of the prophets, which it ascribed to ʿAlī who, in their view, was the equal of the prophets. It did this in order to enhance his position as Imām, as the legitimate successor of the Prophet Muḥammad, and also in order to prove the antiquity of the Shīʿite faith.

One of the prophets whose biography contained numerous events that were deemed similar to events in ʿAlī's life was Ṣāliḥ, especially the events surrounding his she-camel. Both the prophet and the she-camel share quite a few similarities with the Imām: ʿAlī and the she-camel were both born inside a rock; the births of both ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ were accompanied by miracles and the two men were also physically similar; both had illuminated

[56] Al-Masʿūdī 1417/1997, 2:409; Ibn Abī al-Dunyā 1408/1988, 107, *ḥadīth* no. 44.

[57] Al-Qummī 1404/1983, 2:132; al-Majlisī 1404/1983, 11:54, *ḥadīth* no. 31; al-Jazā'irī, 1420/1999, 151–152.

faces and both possessed great knowledge; both spoke the language of the beasts and both had shouts that instilled fear into their enemies, and both foretold their fate. ʿAlī knew who would kill him, where and how, and Ṣāliḥ knew who would kill his she-camel, where and how.

Further similarities exist as well. In both cases it was a woman who incited to murder; in both cases the victim's son was also killed; the killers in both cases were "the most wretched of men"; the time of death, the killers' punishment, and the time of that punishment are also similar in both cases. Furthermore, the prophet and the Imām were buried in the same grave, and both will ride she-camels on the Day of Resurrection.

Clearly this degree of similarity cannot be a coincidence. Rather, it constitutes an example of the Shīʿite effort to demonstrate that ʿAlī was the equal of the prophets.

A further motive for the many points of similarity between the prophet and the Imām may be the Shīʿite view that just as the prophets and their executors fought against injustice, so did the Shīʿite Imāms. ʿAlī thus represents the struggle for social justice in which the prophets and messengers of God engaged before him. As the successor of these prophets, including the prophet Ṣāliḥ, he is in the Shīʿite view the inheritor of their fight for justice, as reflected also in many events in their lives.

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The Image of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in the Dreams of Visitors to His Tomb

KHALID SINDAWI

THIS STUDY deals with the appearance and the actions of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as manifested in the dreams of visitors to his grave in the city of Najaf. It begins with a survey of the custom of visiting graves in Islam, the importance attached by the Shiʿites to visiting the graves of the Imams, especially that of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and the status of dreams in the Muslim faith and in particular among Shiʿites.[1] The main part of the study will be concerned with how ʿAlī manifests himself in the dreams of visitors to his grave, as well as the actions he takes and the roles he fulfills during these dreams, which include chastising his enemies, doing battle against those who would desecrate his grave, granting protection to those who seek refuge at his grave, demanding of visitors to fulfill the pledges they have made to his grave, foretelling the visitor's future, divining the identity and religious affiliation of the visitor, returning stolen objects to their owners, demanding of Shiʿites that they pay their debts, and confirming the authenticity of a disputed tradition.

It will become clear that when ʿAlī appears in dreams he is described as if he were actually there. Thus he is said to intercede on behalf of his visitors, guide them on the right path, forbid them to sin, and demand of them that they fulfill their social and religious duties. Death, it would appear, had no effect on ʿAlī, since despite his physical absence he is spiritually present among Shiʿites, a constant companion in their midst. This continuing presence is a mark of his nature and power, and constitutes a justification for his authority, as reflected in several widespread Shiʿite beliefs.[2]

Already in the early centuries of Islam it was common to visit graves containing the mortal remains of certain spiritual leaders, in particular that of the Prophet Muhammad.[3] There can be little doubt that visiting graves for the purpose of prayer, in the hope that these

1. By "Shiʿites," it is "Twelver" Shiʿites to whom reference is made in this article.
2. See Vaglieri 1960.
3. See further Meri et al. 2000.

prayers would be answered, was a custom that developed as a result of the holy status accorded to the prophets, Imams and martyrs buried in them. Muslims were therefore enjoined to maintain the status of those buried in the graves by visiting them, thus recognizing their status of having been among the first to have embraced the Muslim faith. From this practice grew the idea among Muslims of visiting graves, and other related customs.

The literature on this topic, ancient and modern, is quite extensive and represents quite diverse points of view. Muslim attitudes toward visiting the graves of prophets and holy men have been quite varied, and scholars and teachers of Islamic law have not been able to come to a consensus on the matter. Some Sunni jurists view the visiting of graves as a good deed, which serves to promote taking admonishments to heart, contemplation, meditating on the afterlife, and asking the deceased to intercede on one's behalf and to provide forgiveness, in accordance with the following saying ascribed to the Prophet: "Before I forbade you to visit graves. But now visit them, for they will remind you of the hereafter." [4] From this tradition it is clear that the Prophet had previously forbidden Muslims to visit graves, but had later revoked this prohibition. The original context for the prohibition may have been that a great number of non-Muslim graves were revered. Eventually, the number of Muslims grew, as did the number of Muslim graves, and so the Prophet decided to make visiting such graves a licit act.

As noted above, however, Muslim legal experts offer different opinions regarding the status of visiting graves. One school of thought forbids it absolutely,[5] while another considers it permissible, and even desirable.[6]

The Importance of Visiting Graves among the Shi'ites

As already mentioned, Shi'ite practice is to encourage visits to the graves of its Imams, for in the Shi'ite view the Imam's glory reflects the

4. Cf. al-Albānī 1992, 227.

5. Some doctors of the Muslim law repudiate those who visit the graves of prophets and holy men in order to ask for their intercession, and indeed anyone who calls on any entity except God; such jurists reject those who pray to the dead for solace, who make vows to the dead and sacrifice to them, since in their opinion any such act constitutes a grave sin, comparable to unbelief. See, for example, al-Albānī 1997, 75.

6. According to Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) it is permissible to greet the dead, and pray for them. It is forbidden, however, to use the graves of prophets and holy men as mosques. It is thus forbidden to use such graves as sites for prayer, to ask for the fulfillment of wishes, or to receive blessings, or to take an oath there in God's name as if they were mosques. For more details, see Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, 43; idem, *Iqtiḍā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, 424; cf. al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-awṭār*, 4: 98–99 (no. 441).

glory of Islam, and worshipping at his grave is a desirable thing. For such visits not only constitute a reconfirmation of the bond between Imam and believer, of the tie between the Shiʿite faithful and their powerful protectors who can intercede on their behalf with God Himself; they also serve the purpose of preserving the group consciousness and distinct identity of Shiʿites as opposed to Sunnis. It is for this reason that Shiʿites turned the resting places of their Imams, in particular the graves of ʿAlī in Najaf [7] and Ḥusayn in Karbala, into centers of Shiʿite worship whose status at times rivaled that of Mecca and the Kaʿba.[8] This was especially true during periods of confrontation between the Safavids (907–1145/1501–1732) and the Ottomans (680–1342/1281–1924), when for many Shiʿites visiting the mausolea of ʿAlī and Ḥusayn replaced the pilgrimage to Mecca.[9] Visiting the shrines of the Imams has in fact become a sacred duty for many Shiʿites, who consider it incumbent upon every believer at least once in his lifetime. Anyone who has visited the grave of ʿAlī (or those of the other Imams) has improved his own religious and social standing, and is often considered to be a champion of the Prophet's Family.[10]

A major factor in promoting the status of visiting Imams' graves was the belief in their powers of intercession. Due to the exalted status of the Imams and their nearness to God, their graves were considered to be the places where supplicants' prayers were most likely to be answered. This belief is demonstrated quite clearly by traditions, supplications and vows in which the hope is expressed that the Imam will intercede with God for the sake of healing, of fulfilling some wish, or of mercy on the Day of Judgment.[11]

Indeed Shiʿite literature includes a genre devoted exclusively to the subject of visiting the mausolea of the Imams. Books of this kind, known as "Books of Shrines" or "Books of Visiting" (*kutub al-mazār, kutub al-ziyāra*),[12] contain information such as when the visit should take place, the kind of supplication to be performed,[13] how the visit is

7. See Honigmann [– Bosworth] 1993.

8. See Nakash 1995.

9. Ayoub 1978, 181–82, 188.

10. Nakash 1994, 141–62; tr. 1996, 301–39.

11. al-Ḥaydarī 1999, 288–89.

12. There are literally dozens of books on the subject, pre-modern as well as modern. For more information on these compositions, see Āghā Bozorg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa* 12: 77–80, 12: 316–26. The best-known pre-modern books on the subject are *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* by Ibn Qūlawayh and *al-Mazār* by al-Shaykh al-Mufīd; one of the most important "books of shrines" to have appeared in recent years is *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* by al-Shaykh ʿAbbās al-Qummī.

13. On prayers and supplications associated with visiting the tomb of ʿAlī in Najaf see, for example, Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Jamāl al-usbūʿ* 31; al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, 10: 217–18, no. 11891; Ibn Bābawayh, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, 2: 586, nos. 3196–98.

to be conducted, and the virtues of visiting. Each of the tombs of the Imams and their descendants is associated with unique virtues ascribed to it, which not infrequently correspond to the virtues of the Ka'ba or the Prophet's tomb in Medina.[14]

The following discussion focuses on visits to the revered tomb of 'Alī in the Gharīyy area of Najaf, where the Imam's mortal remains were buried. Visits to the site are of two kinds: general visits which can take place at any time, and specific visits that take place at specified times known as "venerable occasions" (*al-awqāt al-sharīfa*), of which there are quite a few. The most important of these occassions are the Day of Ghadīr,[15] on the 18th of the month of Dhū 'l-ḥijja; the Prophet's birthday on the 12th of the month of Rabī' al-awwal; and the night of the Prophet's Appointment on the 27th of the month of Rajab.[16]

Many people who live in the towns near 'Alī's tomb visit it every week on the night preceding Friday (that is, the night between Thursday and Friday). This time is considered the most auspicious for those who only wish to spend a single night at the site. It is believed that on those nights 'Alī will appear to the sleeper in his dream, fulfill his wishes, or tell him what he wants to know.[17]

Visitors to 'Alī's grave are required to adhere to a number of rituals and ceremonies before entering the mausoleum and while staying there. They must cleanse themselves, take off their shoes, and refrain from carrying weapons. Prayers and supplications play an important

14. Venerated burial sites other than 'Alī's tomb include the tomb of Ḥusayn and his half-brother at Karbalā'; the tomb of the Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim, his grandson Muḥammad and the Imām al-Jawād at al-Kāẓimiyya; the tomb of the Imām 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī and his son al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī at Samarra; the tomb of the Imām 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā at Mashhad; the tombs of Fāṭima the Prophet's daughter, Ḥasan, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-'Ābidīn, al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, all in the city of Medina; the tomb of Zaynab al-Kubrā (Umm Kulthūm) in the town of Rāwiya in Syria; the tomb of Fāṭima, daughter of the Imām al-Kāẓim, in the city of Qumm; the tomb of Muslim b. 'Aqīl next to the mosque of Kufa; the tomb of Muḥammad, son of the Imām al-Hādī, in a town near the Tigris River; and the tomb of al-Qāsim son of the Imām Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Kāẓim, in an enclosure known as Arḍ Nahr al-Jarbū'iyya in the district of al-Ḥilla. For more detail on Shi'ite shrines and holy places in Iraq see Nakash 1994, 141–83, 285–86; tr. 1996, 301–39, 517–19; Donaldson 1984, 251–270.

15. This day commemorates the occasion on which the Prophet appointed 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib as his successor at Ghadīr Khumm; see Vaglieri 1965.

16. 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, 402–21. For details concerning the significance of the month of Rajab see Ibn Ḥidhā', *Faḍā'il shahr Rajab*; 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Faḍā'il al-shuhūr wa'l-ayyām*, 27–32; Kister 1971, 1995.

17. This is true not only of 'Alī's tomb, but of all Shi'ite shrines and holy places, including the tombs of the other Imams. In fact, the same practices were followed by the Arabs in pre-Islamic times, when the Ka'ba was visited for the same purposes. See further Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich 1960–62, 2: 48. Such practices are still common in Morocco. See Westermarck 1926, 2: 56ff.

part in visits to the graves of the Imams, since they are perceived as a means to approach nearer to God, to obtain His intercession and aid in dispelling grief and worries, and to receive divine help in the preserving of one's sustenance and health. As Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaydarī has noted, from a psychological perspective these supplications constitute a mirror which reflects fundamental feelings such as grief, loneliness and worry, and the search for a secure path toward spiritual calm and stability.[18]

The Virtues of Visiting the Grave of ʿAlī in Shiʿite Literature[19]

Following the burial of ʿAlī in the year 40/661, his tomb became a consecrated shrine, which Shiʿite writers then did their best to promote. The virtues of visiting his and other deceased Imams' shrines became a constant theme in their compositions. In fact, as already noted, the tomb of ʿAlī in Shiʿite writings has taken on many of the virtues attributed to Mecca [20] and to the Prophet's tomb in Medina,[21] and occasionally also those associated with Jerusalem.[22] It would appear that Shiʿite writers adopted the virtues of ʿAlī's tomb from those of the above-mentioned sites in imitation of Sunni shrines; in fact, the virtues ascribed to ʿAlī's tomb exceed those usually attributed to its Sunni counterparts.

Among the numerous merits ascribed to ʿAlī's grave are the notions that on the Day of Judgment all believers (that is, Shiʿites)[23] will be gathered there and enter Paradise without reckoning; that the tomb itself is sacred, and any person with a physical disability who takes refuge there will be healed;[24] that any prayer written in it is the equivalent of a valid "major" pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*), and any supererogatory

18. al-Ḥaydarī 1999, 289.

19. ʿAlī's tomb has a number of names, among them "al-Gharū" (see Sindawi 2002–03); "The Venerable Shrine of Ghariyy" (*al-mashhad al-sharīf al-gharawī*) (see al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il* 8:247); "The Most Venerable Sacred Shrine of Ghariyy" (*al-mashhad al-ashraf al-muqaddas al-gharawī*) (see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42:318); "The Enclosure of Ghariyy" (*al-ḥaḍra al-gharawiyya*) (see *Biḥār al-anwār*, 24:11); "The Venerable Enclosure of Gharī" (*al-ḥaḍra al-gharawiyya al-sharīfa*) (see *Biḥār al-anwār*, 105:109, 105:85, 52:73); "The Sacred Enclosure of Ghariyy" (*al-ḥaḍra al-muqaddasa al-gharawiyya*) (see Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Binā al-maqāla al-fāṭimiyya*, 424).

20. Cf. Watt et al. 1991.

21. Cf. Watt 1986.

22. Cf. Goitein and Grabar 1986.

23. The word "believers" (*muʾminūn*) in the Shiʿite lexicon refers to Shiʿites only; this usage is thus in contrast to that of the word "Muslims" (*muslimūn*), which refers only to Sunnis, or to other Muslims who do not believe fully in the Shiʿite Imams; cf. Amir-Moezzi 1994, 146, n. 43; Kohlberg 1986, 19; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 2:27–28, nos. 1–2.

24. al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, 2:440; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 3:252–54, nos. 13–20; al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, 10:219, no. 11895–5, quoted by al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 27:307; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 91.

act of piety performed there is the equivalent of a "minor" pilgrimage to Mecca (*ʿumra*); that it was from here that the Prophet departed on his midnight journey to Heaven; that the right side, the middle and the back of the enclosure are each parts of the gardens of Paradise; and that even sitting at the site, without reciting the Qurʾān or mentioning God's name, constitutes worship. The sixth Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765),[25] is quoted as saying: "If people knew what was in it, they would come to it even if they had to crawl."[26] Furthermore, it is reported that the Mahdī,[27] after his appearance, will come to ʿAlī's grave, and command that a mosque be marked out on it.[28] He will lead the people in prayer and then order that a canal be dug from the back of the shrine of Ḥusayn to ʿAlī's tomb, and that dams and mills be built over it. The Mahdī's desire, then, is to connect the tombs of ʿAlī and his son Ḥusayn by means of a canal with water from the sacred Euphrates River, in order to turn the two enclosures into a single expanse.

Other merits ascribed to ʿAlī's grave include the following: that the gates of Heaven will open for those who visit the grave and pray; that any visitor will be visited by God Himself on the Day of Reckoning and his sins will be forgiven; that he who visits the grave will be visited by angels, prophets and believers;[29] that the use of its pebbles as ornaments is considered desirable;[30] that those who are buried in the vicinity of ʿAlī's grave will have their period of affliction in the grave and the "gap" (*barzakh*)[31] between death and resurrection shortened, and will be spared the interrogations of the two Angels of Death;[32] that ʿAlī's grave (like "The Inhabited House,"[33] Karbala [34] and Tus)[35] called on God for protection from inundation by the Flood, and God raised it up to Himself;[36] and that wine introduced to the Ghariyy area of Najaf

25. Cf. Hodgson 1965.

26. Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, 73.

27. Cf. Haar 1993, 443; Sachedina 1981.

28. For a description of this mosque see, for example, al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, 496; al-Ṭabarsī, *Iʿlām al-warā*, 460; al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, 2: 380; al-Najafī, *Muntakhab al-anwār al-muḍīʾa*, 191.

29. Donaldson 1984, 64.

30. al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, 3: 297–98; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, 5: 92, chapter 54, nos. 6015-16; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 6: 31–33, chapter 10, nos. 1–7.

31. See Carra da Vaux 1960.

32. See Wensinck 1993.

33. "The Inhabited House" connotes a house in the seventh heaven visited by Muhammad during his *miʿrāj* or night-journey. It is said to be located immediately above the sacred precinct at Mecca. For details see Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, 35.

34. See further Kanazi 1992; al-Makkī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 17.

35. See Minorsky and Bosworth 2000, 740.

36. al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 6: 110, no. 12.

will turn into vinegar, and no dog will enter there.[37] God visits the grave with His angels, as do prophets and believers;[38] its site is one of the gardens of Paradise, inhabited only by prophets;[39] there is a ladder there by which the spiritual exertions of the visitors rise to Heaven;[40] when a person visits the site, his or her life is prolonged, and it is shortened when he or she leaves, or, in other words, the time spent at ʿAlī's grave does not count as part of the visitor's decreed life-span; the grace bestowed by the grave reaches out to a distance of twelve miles; and anyone beset by distress or anxiety will have them removed by God on visiting the grave.

As a result Najaf, and the other holy shrines as well, attract thousands of pilgrims on every one of the recommended days of visiting, every year. Shiʿite theologians and scholars have done much to elevate ʿAlī's status, and have thus encouraged these visits by Shiʿites. This they have done by portraying ʿAlī as a fabulous figure, an immortal, unblemished hero, capable of performing miracles,[41] of fulfilling personal desires in this world, and of answering supplications concerning a better crop, improved health, the birth of male children and help in defeating the enemy. In fact, some Shiʿite authorities have claimed that it was the person buried at the site, the Imam himself, who was the object of worship.[42] In addition, all the objects inside the tomb are considered to be in a special relationship with the Imam, and thus also to partake of his sanctity. For this reason visitors must treat them as well with the utmost respect.

Dream Visions and Faith in Islam

The widely attested view that seeing the Prophet (or, in case of a Shiʿite, one of the Imams) in a dream is equivalent to seeing him in the flesh has had considerable influence on the social and intellectual life of believers. In light of this belief, many people would treat what the Prophet or an Imam said to them in their dreams as if they were true *ḥadīth*s, which no devout Muslim could possibly doubt.[43] The modern reader may indeed

37. Donaldson 1984, 62.

38. al-Mufīd, *al-Mazār*, 32; Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, 89.

39. al-Mufīd, *al-Mazār*, 35. The prophets in question are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. See also Q. 35: 46; al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*. For why Adam is absent from the above list, see Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿIlal al-sharā'iʿ*, 1: 122–23, ch. 101, and Amir-Moezzi 1994, 163–64, n. 184.

40. al-Mufīd, *al-Mazār*, 35.

41. The status of miracles among Shiʿites has been treated in a number of works, among them Momen 1985, 23; Jafri 1979, 294; Gramlich 1987, 39; Gardet 1978.

42. See Ayoub 1978, 181–82, 188; Nakash 1995.

43. See al-Wardī 1994, 53.

wonder at finding in a book of *ḥadīth* sayings attributed to the Prophet or an Imam on the authority of a dreamer. One such saying which has become quite widely known is the following: "Whosoever has seen us has seen us," meaning that anyone who sees the Prophet or an Imam in his sleep has actually seen him, since the Devil is unable to impersonate either a prophet or an Imam in a dream. Therefore, when a trustworthy transmitter of traditions relates a saying which the Prophet or an Imam told him in his sleep, the saying is accepted.[44]

Some narrators have become so convinced of the sanctity of their dreams that they have changed their minds about historical figures known to have been tyrants, on the grounds that they had a dream in which the tyrant in question was absolved of blame. For example, the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil [45] (r. 232–47/ 847–61), an iniquitous ruler according to historical sources, has been forgiven by some transmitters of traditions on the grounds that they saw in a dream that God Himself had forgiven him.[46]

Observant Shi'ites, like all religious persons, absorb their faith from their social surroundings; in their dreams they see visions supportive of their faith, which then increases in strength when they wake up, even if some aspects of the faith thus acquired may perhaps run counter to the principles of Islam itself.

Dreams in Shi'ite Islam

Dreams have played a significant role in Islamic civilization. As in other cultural settings, they are believed to provide a channel for communicating truths from the world beyond to this world. In this respect Shi'ites are no different from other Muslims, with the exception that they believe that it is only the Imams who possess the ability, or the holy spirit, that enables them to receive information from the world beyond about what is really happening.[47] This perception helps to explain why the Imam's dreams are considered reliable, and why he is believed to be able to interpret dreams.

In this connection al-Majlisī (1037–1110/1627–98)[48] collected a number of *ḥadīth*s in which dreams are described as being "a part of prophecy that had been left behind." Al-Majlisī relates that the Imams

44. On this matter, see further the article of L. Kinberg in this volume.

45. See Kennedy 1993.

46. al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*, 411.

47. See further Macdonald 1931, and compare the article of Kinberg in this volume.

48. Al-Majlisī, known as the Erudite (*'allāma*) al-Majlisī or as the Second al-Majlisī, the author of *Biḥār al-anwār*; he was born and died in the city of Isfahan.

were exceptionally proficient in interpreting the dreams of their followers. He goes on to discuss the problem of invoking the Imams in dreams. He quotes one tradition according to which the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq stated that anyone who wished to see an Imam in his dream should perform the ritual ablution before prayer and then implore the Imam to appear. He should do this for three consecutive days, and then the Imam would be sure to appear to him and tell him what he needed to know regarding his situation. Al-Majlisī adds that any vision in which the Prophet or an Imam appears and orders the ruler to do good is necessarily a true vision which may be accepted as genuine.[49]

On this matter ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is quoted as saying: "Those of us [i.e. the twelve Imams] who die are not in fact dead."[50] Of course, the Shiʿite Imam inherits the knowledge of the prophets completely, and possesses the ability to contact the world beyond, so that any vision or dream which he sees is of necessity valid.[51]

Extraordinary powers are attributed to the Imam, as well as the ability to perform miracles.[52] With the aid of a pillar of light, the Imam can see things which are invisible to ordinary mortals. He can see into vast distances in all directions, and in every land he erects a lighthouse by which he sees what humankind is doing.[53] The Imam is privy to men's most secret thoughts and observes their actions and behavior everywhere. He also knows everything which happens in Heaven and on earth, and in the invisible world.[54]

It is thus no wonder that we hear of a letter attributed to the Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq on the interpretation of dreams,[55] and that Shiʿites consider it as a source of the highest knowledge and of hidden wisdom.[56]

Some Shiʿite scholars are of the opinion that the visions of prophets and Imams are genuine, in fact that they constitute a kind of revelation.[57] They base their position on the following saying attributed to the Prophet: "Whoever sees me in a dream has actually seen me, for the

49. Donaldson 1984, 129–41.

50. Quṭb al-Dīn al Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij*, 2:818, no. 29, quoted by al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 3:76; al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajat*, 275, no. 4; Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, 6:379; Amir-Moezzi 1994, 99.

51. Cf. Donaldson 1984, 129–41.

52. See further Loebenstein 2003.

53. al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, 334ff.

54. Kohlberg 2003, 128–29.

55. The text of this letter can be found in Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, *Tafsīr al-aḥlām*, vol. 1.

56. Cf. Bland 1854; Hosain 1932; Clarke 2000, 7.

57. Cf. Wensinck – [Rippin] 2000, 53.

Devil cannot appear in my form, nor in the form of any of my regents (*awṣiyā'ī*)."[58] In another version, "Whoever visits me in a dream has actually visited me, because the Devil[59] cannot appear in my form, nor in that of any of my regents...."[60]

According to the tradition transmitted on the authority of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) if one sees the Prophet or an Imam in a dream, doing or commanding what is right, or forbidding disobedience or pointing out how shameful it is, then the dream is genuine.[61] If, however, the content of the dream is in conflict with Islamic law, it is not to be obeyed.[62]

The Image of 'Alī in Visitors' Dreams

The following section deals with dreams reported by visitors to 'Alī's grave in Najaf, in particular those which appear in *The Joy of al-Ghariyy: Gazing upon the Grave of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, in al-Najaf* (*Farḥat al-ghariyy fī ta'yīn qabr amīr al-mu'minīn 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib fī 'l-Najaf*), by Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Karīm b. Ṭāwūs (d. 694/1293).

The Significance and Contents of the Farḥat al-Ghariyy

Farḥat al-Ghariyy is the earliest known book to have dealt with the identification of 'Alī's grave in Najaf and the reasons why its location was kept a secret. Ibn Ṭāwūs collected the various traditions on this issue, with their complete chains of transmission. Many of these traditions, quoting prophets and Imams, support the claim that al-Najaf is indeed the place where 'Alī was buried. Those quoted on the matter include Zayd b. 'Alī,[63] Hārūn al-Rashīd,[64] Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr,[65] as well as a number of members of the Hāshimite family and several Muslim scholars. The latter part of Ibn Ṭāwūs's book is devoted to miracles and wonders associated with the site, in particular wondrous visions seen in their sleep by visitors to the grave. In what follows we shall deal with these reported visions in detail.

Most of the dreams included in the present study are of a literal

58. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 58: 234, no. 45.
59. Cf. Fahd and Rippin 1997, 406.
60. Ibn Bābawayh, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, 2: 257, no. 11.
61. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 58: 211.
62. Ṭālīb 1994, 127.
63. Cf. Madelung 2000.
64. Cf. Omar 1971.
65. Cf. Kennedy 1991.

nature, quite intelligible as they are presented, with no need for psychological interpretation of their symbolism.[66] Most of the visions described appeared to people while they were sleeping at ʿAlī's mausoleum in Najaf. As we have seen above, the site itself is very much revered by Shiʿite Muslims, and this very fact certainly affects the contents of the dreams and their credibility in the eyes of the dreamer. It should be remembered that the dreamer, after he had come to the site, would have performed his ritual ablution, invoked God's name numerous times, and repeatedly pronounced his supplications. It is hardly to be wondered, then, that after he had gone to sleep there he would have seen ʿAlī in his dream; nor that Shiʿite custom would consider such visions as completely genuine.

The visions reported here do not usually concern themselves much with ʿAlī's external appearance; rather, they tend to focus on his moral and transcendental attributes. In some rare cases the Imam is described as standing in the corner of his burial chamber, but no description of his features is given; in other cases he appears holding his hands as he comes out of the chamber, stands at the entrance to the mausoleum, and scolds visitors who did not fulfill vows they had made to the site. In still another dream he is seen to strike an enemy of his who had cursed him.

In one vision that alludes to his external physical attributes ʿAlī is described as holding a dagger, about to kill someone who has desecrated his tomb. In fact, it would be fair to say that of ʿAlī's physical characteristics, only his hands are mentioned in the visions of visitors to his grave. It is quite likely that this feature is related to the purpose for which people come to the grave. Since that purpose usually involves a petition for help in solving a problem, it should not surprise us that ʿAlī is seen to point to the solution with his hands: he may express anger by clutching his hands together; he may attack an enemy with a dagger held in his hand, or hold the dreamer's hand in his own when scolding him, as if to make clear to the dreamer that he cannot escape the punishment that is due to him.

The lack of attention given to the other physical characteristics of ʿAlī may also be related to the holy site that is the location for the visions, and which perhaps led to a tendency to de-emphasize physical attributes and to focus instead on the topic in question and on ʿAlī's moral and transcendental attributes as Guiding Imam to his community even after death.

66. For details concerning literal and symbolic dreams, see Kinberg 1994; idem 1986, 295, no. 53; idem 1991, 223–24.

ʿAlī's Roles in Dreams

In the elegiac dreams of the visitors to his grave ʿAlī is seen to play a number of different roles.

Punishing the enemy

ʿAlī does not normally appear to the wicked. He may, however, appear to his enemies, especially those who curse him, in their dreams. In such cases, he is reported to approach them and strike them, and when they awaken they find that the spot where they had been struck has turned black, in a clear sign of the Imam's punishment. To give one example, it is related that someone once walked through the market in Damascus when he encountered a man half of whose face was blackened and covered. When asked what this meant the man answered thus: "By God, I have vowed to tell my story to anyone who asked me about it. I was an enemy of ʿAlī, Commander of the Faithful, and cursed him. Then I had a dream in which I visited his grave on several nights. In the dream a man approached me and asked me: 'Did you curse ʿAlī?' He then slapped my face. When I woke up I discovered that half of my face had turned black as a result of the slap."[67] In this dream ʿAlī does not make an explicit appearance. However, the context of the dream, as well as its content, clearly point to ʿAlī as the person who chastised the dreamer. The punishment is administered inside the dream itself, and is felt to have been deserved. In fact, the narrative demonstrates a kind of "imaginary justice"; the supernatural nature of its agency is there but never specified, so that the religious, or rather the ethical, foundation of the story is left to the reader's tacit understanding.

This kind of dream may be said to constitute a means for expressing the interaction between the punishment and the religious and ethical considerations on which it was based. In the case in question, the blackening of the face constitutes a settlement of accounts, and the role of ʿAlī in the dream is to mete out justice; it may be inferred that it is God who, using ʿAlī as an instrument, punishes those who vilify an Imam protected by divine providence.[68]

Doing battle with the desecrators of his grave

In some dreams ʿAlī is depicted with a dagger in hand, ready to attack someone who has desecrated his grave, or who has come in order to

67. al-Ṭabarsī, *Dār al-salām*, 1: 227.

68. For further discussion of the application of punishment through dreams, see Malti-Douglas 1980, 155.

kill someone who sought refuge at the grave. If the desecrator does not desist, ʿAlī threatens to tear out the culprit's soul. The dreamer, extremely frightened, feels remorse for what he has done, and on awakening immediately contributes money to the grave, as compensation for his actions.[69]

In this kind of dream the desecrators of ʿAlī's grave believe that they are being punished by God Himself for their misdeeds. In one such tradition, dated 575/1179–80, it is related that Amir Mujāhid al-Dīn Sanqar al-Ās[70] was intent on killing a Bedouin of the Banū Khafāja tribe who had sought refuge at ʿAlī's mausoleum and prayed to him: "Do not remove your protection, O Father of Ḥasan." The Bedouin was then taken to Sanqar to be executed. But Sanqar had had a dream in which ʿAlī, holding a dagger in his hand, had said to him: "By God, if you do not release this Bedouin who sought protection in me, I shall take out your soul with this dagger." And indeed, after Sanqar woke up he released the Bedouin and gave him presents, including fifteen *raṭl* of silver, which he ordered beaten into sheets to decorate ʿAlī's grave.[71] As for Mujāhid al-Dīn himself, it would appear that he was motivated to publicize his vision in order to win over supporters by appearing to be a devout follower of the very popular ʿAlī, and to retain his hold on power by demonstrating that he obeyed ʿAlī's wishes.

Protecting those who seek refuge at his grave

According to Shiʿite tradition, Imam ʿAlī is not dead even in death, and still has God-given powers to protect at his grave those of his followers who are persecuted by their enemies. Anyone who attacks a Shiʿite believer at his grave will suffer defeat, since ʿAlī himself will protect his followers at his grave. In his *Biḥār al-anwār* al-Majlisī relates a tradition according to which a Christian army besieged the tomb of ʿAlī in the year 1024/1624. The inhabitants of Najaf fortified ʿAlī's mausoleum and locked its gates against the onslaught. The Christian army resorted to the use of catapults.[72] It is further related that some of the tomb's custodians at the time had visions in which they saw ʿAlī with a blackened hand. When asked about it, the Imam answered that the blackening was due to the lead which he had had to remove.[73]

69. For examples of this type of dream see Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 152–54.

70. Qāymāz b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zīnī Abū Manṣūr, known as Mujāhid al-Dīn, a Mamluk commander originally from Sijistan (d. 595/1199). For more details, see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 4:82–84.

71. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 152–54.

72. Cf. Hill 1991.

73. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 97:253, quoted in al-Ṭabarsī, *Dār al-salām*, 1:271–72.

In this dream ʿAlī is portrayed as defending those who sought refuge at his tomb. Anyone who entered the mausoleum was protected, even from enemy fire. ʿAlī protects with his own hands, which have become blackened due to his efforts not to let any harm come to the defenders of the site.

Demanding of visitors that they fulfill their vows to the grave

In a tradition related on the authority of Ibn Muẓaffar al-Najjār,[74] the latter owned a piece of land which was taken away from him by force. He relates that he went to ʿAlī's grave in order to complain to him about the matter, and vowed that if his property were restored to him he would give a donation to the sitting room of the mausoleum. Not long after, his stolen plot of land was indeed returned to him, but he forgot his vow. Later Ibn Muẓaffar again happened to visit ʿAlī's grave and stayed the night there. In his sleep he dreamt that he saw ʿAlī standing in a corner, holding his hands together. Then ʿAlī walked toward the door of the tomb and with his hand pointed to the sitting room. He then demanded that Ibn Muẓaffar fulfill his vow. Ibn Muẓaffar promised the Imam that he would, and indeed, as soon as he awakened he began doing so.[75] Here ʿAlī is seen to scold a man who had neglected to fulfill his vow; he insists that visitors keep their promises to help in the upkeep of his tomb. But as soon as ʿAlī has appeared, the negligent visitor promises to mend his ways, and immediately begins fulfilling his vow, because further disobedience might cause the Imam to avenge himself by inflicting unbearable pain on the culprit. In this case, then, the dream saved the dreamer from his perceived troubles and purified him.

Seeing what the future holds for the visitors to his grave[76]

In the dreams of visitors to ʿAlī's grave, the Imam is reported to know their names and social positions, and to be able to forecast their futures. In dreams ʿAlī provides a glimpse at the world beyond, as if he were an intermediary between God and the visitor, connecting the actual with

74. This individual does not appear in the standard biographical collections.

75. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 159. In this dream the depiction of ʿAlī is reminiscent of the saints revered in Egypt. See further Goldziher 1897.

76. Dreams are the remaining permitted instrument of prognostication; all the other methods which were in use in pre-Islamic times such as soothsaying and divination are forbidden in Islamic law. See, however, the article of Bağcı in this volume.

the hidden world and providing the dreamer with glad tidings about his future.

One tradition reports that a group of poor people came to visit ʿAlī's grave. At the time the custodian[77] of the grave was a man called Ibn Maʿṣūm b. Abī 'l-Ṭayyib Aḥmad, to whom ʿAlī appeared in a dream and said: "Tonight a group of forty poor people came to you. Among them is Ṭalā'iʿ b. Ruzzīk[78] (d. 556/1161), a most devoted follower of mine. Tell him: "Go, for I shall make you ruler of Egypt." In the morning Ibn Maʿṣūm called out his name in the presence of the visitors. Ṭalā'iʿ came up to him and was told of the dream. Thereupon he went to Egypt, where he became a very prominent man.[79]

Recovering stolen property

An important function which ʿAlī fulfills in dreams is to return objects stolen inside the mausoleum to their rightful owners. He does this by pointing in the dream to the location of the stolen object, and then by physically taking the dreamer to the spot. According to Shiʿite belief, ʿAlī was privy to the hidden world when alive, and since in the world of the dead and in the world of dreams he is still alive in fact, he is still able to see what others cannot, and can show others things that to them are invisible.[80] As an example, one tradition, dated 584/1188, relates that a person named ʿAbbās al-Amʿaḍ[81] once visited ʿAlī's grave. He carried a sword with him, but before he began performing the ceremonies of the visit he placed his sword in a corner of the mausoleum.[82] When he finished the rites he could not find his sword, nor did he see anyone holding it. He was very angry, and in his dream he spoke thus to ʿAlī: "I am your servant ʿAbbās al-Amʿaḍ. For fifty years now I have been visiting you every night during the months of Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramadan. Now my sword has been stolen in your presence. If you do not return it to me I shall never visit you again." ʿAbbās then went home and three days later was shown the sword in his dream. Later, when the

77. Today the custodian of ʿAlī's grave carries the title of "Gatekeeper of the Presence" (*sādin al-ḥaḍra*), or *kalīdār*, meaning advocate and guard. His duties are to guard and administer the sacred precinct and to inform both workers and visitors as to their rights and duties. See further al-Ḥaydarī 1999, 292–93.

78. Cf. Bianquis 2000.

79. al-Karbāsī, *al-Mawsūʿa al-ḥusayniyya*, 312.

80. Cf. Kohlberg 2003.

81. This individual is not mentioned in the standard biographical collections.

82. Carrying a weapon inside the tomb of an Imam is forbidden by law and custom. See further al-Ḥaydarī 1999, 289.

custodian of the grave asked him how he knew where to find his sword, ʿAbbās told him that ʿAlī had come to him in a dream and told him to go to the house of a certain person, and ascend to a room lined with straw. ʿAlī had also made him promise not to humiliate or expose the culprit.[83] ʿAbbās duly went there and found the sword exactly where ʿAlī in the dream had told him he would find it.[84]

Demanding of Shiʿites that they pay their debts

In some dreams ʿAlī calls on those visiting his grave to refrain from cheating in money matters and to return loans to their lenders. As in the previous example, although dead, the Imam appears to his visitors in their dreams, knows their secrets, guides them, forbids them to do evil and demands that they fulfill their social and religious duties.

In a tradition transmitted by the author of *Farḥat al-ghariyy,* a man borrowed a sum of money from another, a transaction witnessed by the (deceased) ʿAlī.[85] Three years passed, and the borrower did not return the money to the lender. One night some friends of the lender visited ʿAlī's grave and one of them dreamed that the borrower died and was about to be buried next to ʿAlī, but ʿAlī refused to allow him to be buried next to him and ordered that no one should pray at this man's funeral. Still in the dream, the dreamer then addressed ʿAlī as follows: "O Commander of the Faithful, the dead man is one of your followers." ʿAlī answered: "Yes, but he made me a witness to a loan which he did not return to its owner." When the man awoke the following morning, he went to the borrower and asked him why he had not returned the loan. The borrower answered: "I did not borrow any money from this man." But when he heard from his friend about his dream he repented and gave the money back to the lender.[86]

Knowing his visitors' identities and religious affiliations

In his visitors' dreams ʿAlī appears alert, fully aware of his visitors'

83. In such cases, such considerate behavior is a mark of the honorable man; miracles (*muʿjizāt*), by contrast, should be made public. See, for example, Loebenstein 2003, 206.

84. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 154–56, quoted by al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42: 324.

85. Taking an oath on ʿAlī's grave is a common occurrence, done by calling on him to witness a person's declaration or commitment. Among Shiʿites the preferred days for taking such a solemn oath are Fridays and Mondays. Monday is considered auspicious because it is the day of the week on which the Prophet was born. For more details on the Prophet's birth see, for example, Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā bi-aḥwāl al-muṣṭafā*, 1: 90–91.

86. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 135.

identities and religious affiliations. Thus it is said that if a non-Muslim happens to enter the mausoleum, ʿAlī informs the custodian in a dream, and then the latter, after he awakens, will hurry to expel the non-Muslim from the sanctuary. In a case like this ʿAlī is presumed to receive information from the beyond, in order to be able to indicate to his followers where any non-Muslim visitors to his grave are to be found. One tradition on this subject relates that a Christian once came to visit the grave. On entering he paid two dinars to the custodian, a man by the name of ʿAlī b. Ṭaḥāl, and asked him to lock the door of the shrine behind him so that he would be left alone. After the custodian went to sleep he dreamt that ʿAlī asked him to expel the visitor from the tomb because he was a Christian.[87] Thereupon the custodian awoke, took a piece of rope, and placed it around the Christian's neck. The visitor protested and denied that he was a Christian, but when the custodian told him that ʿAlī had informed him of this in a dream, the visitor was so impressed that he pronounced the profession of faith: "I bear witness that there is no God except Allāh, and that ʿAlī is the Commander of the Faithful." [88]

Certifying the authenticity of a tradition

In his visitors' dreams ʿAlī answers their queries about the genuineness of traditions related to matters of faith, when the visitors are in doubt. In such a case ʿAlī appears in the visitor's dream and tells him if the tradition in question is reliable or not. One tradition on this matter is related by Abū Muḥammad al-Faḥḥām,[89] on the authority of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Manṣūrī,[90] on the authority of the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī [91] (d. 260/874), on the authority of his forefathers: according to this tradition, the Prophet said that anyone who performed an obligatory prayer properly will have his wishes fulfilled. To this al-Faḥḥām added that he himself had gone to ʿAlī's grave and stayed there overnight. In his dream he saw ʿAlī and asked him if the preceding tradition, ascribed to Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, was authentic. ʿAlī answered him: "Certainly, when you finish your prayer, go down on your knees and say: 'By God, he who related it spoke the truth, as did he who passed it on [...] and then make your desire known'."[92]

87. Non-Muslims are forbidden to enter ʿAlī's mausoleum, just as they are forbidden to enter the sacred precinct around the Kaʿba. For details see al-Ḥaydarī 1999, 292.

88. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-ghariyy*, 146–47.

89. For details see al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, 297, no. 806.

90. For details see Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Muhaj al-daʿawāt*, 271.

91. Cf. Eliash 1971.

92. Ṭālib 1994, 181–82.

Conclusion

Shi'ite writers have succeeded in promoting the status of visits to the grave of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to that of a major religious principle. These visits constitute the major occasion on which Shi'ite believers can show their respect to the Imām 'Alī, to whom they ascribe miraculous powers, and to whose actual historical figure they add many supernatural and metaphysical traits. The miracles ascribed to 'Alī have played a part in establishing certain principles of faith among Shi'ites. One method by which 'Alī's stature has been promoted is his appearance in dreams. When his visitors see him in their dreams they are indeed impressed, for in the Shi'ite view he enjoys in death a more lofty position next to God than he did before he was killed. The reason for this is that during his lifetime he was involved in all manner of mundane matters, in addition to his religious and other-worldly concerns. However, after his death his pure spirit was able to occupy itself solely with eternal spiritual matters. His spirit can therefore help those in need and answer those who believe in the power of his intercession.[93]

In dreams 'Alī is capable of performing many kinds of miracles. He protects those who seek refuge at his tomb; he has knowledge of the hidden world and knows the fate of his visitors; he punishes with severity anyone who dares curse him or desecrate his grave; he scolds those who do not fulfill their vows to his tomb; he demands of Shi'ites that they pay back their debts; he confirms the authenticity of traditions concerning the Shi'ite faith about which there is doubt; he knows the identity and religious affiliation of visitors to his grave; and he returns stolen objects to their rightful owners.

'Alī in dreams appears as if he were alive; he mediates between his visitors and God, as if he were a bridge between the hidden and the manifest world. Although dead and buried, he still guides his followers and shows them the right path. The fact of his death in no way removes him from the life of his followers: His body may be gone, but his spirit is present, supervising the state of the Shi'ite community, guiding its members, forbidding them to do evil and demanding of them that they fulfill their social and religious obligations.[94] 'Alī has the capacity to perform these functions in his life and after his death, since in the Shi'ite view death does not deprive an Imam of his powers; rather, 'Alī continues to answer when his followers appeal to him, and they continue to seek his advice on matters concerning their own lives.

It would thus appear that the image of 'Alī in his visitors' dreams

93. Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, 91.

94. Amir-Moezzi 1994, 99.

reflects the popular view of his nature, his abilities and his powers, all of which justify his sovereign status[95] and reinforce popular belief in his capacity to bestow blessing. From a psychological point of view, it may be observed that ʿAlī's appearances in the dreams of Shiʿite believers provide them with a refuge from injustice and hopelessness that may facilitate the resolution of problems in wakefulness.

95. Ibid, 99–123.

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The Grave of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: Different Views About its Specific Location and the Locations of the Graves of Some Other Prophets Buried in it

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ABSTRACT

In this article the status of Amīru āl-Muʾminīn ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the deed of his assassination are first outlined, along with the common idea that ᶜAlī foresaw his murder, its place, its time, its manner, and even the identity of his murderer. ᶜAlī did nothing to prevent his murder because he believed that his approaching death was his fate and God's will. Hence ᶜAlī tells the news of his death before his actual murder. Next in this article nine places that the historians mention and that are believed to be the location of ᶜAlī's grave are described.

The author gives greater weight to the opinion of the Shiᶜī scholars who hold that ᶜAlī is buried in Najaf, four miles away from Kufa.

Various views are set forth holding that ᶜAlī's grave also contains the remains of the prophets Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Nūḥ. Accordingly, the land of Najaf became a holy land for the Shiᶜīs comparable to the Kaᶜbah. The holiness of Kufa stems from ᶜAlī's holiness, followed by the holiness of the other prophets.

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INTRODUCTION

The early Arab historians are nearly unanimous o manner of ᶜAlī's assassination, the identity of his assa and the motives behind this historic murder. Yet same historians disagree about the location of the gra of this focal personality, who played a decisive role in t establishment of the foundations of Islām at its beginning.

ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib also played a central and leading role in the events of the great schism in the history of Islām, whose effects continued to appear until the emergence of two main parties in Islām, the Sunnīs and the Shīᶜīs. The latter apparently assumed this name because they "sided with" ᶜAlī and his family. They declared their support for him and argued that he was more entitled than any other person to be the caliph of Muḥammad (Ṣ), and that he was the only legitimate successor to the Messenger.

The Shīᶜīs encountered strong opposition because of their views, especially on the part of the *Umayyads* (*Banū Umayyah*). These undertook to resist the Shīᶜīs and to diminish their political and religious role during the first decades of Islām.

For their part, the Shīᶜīs did not remain idle in face of the deeds of their opponents, the Banū Umayyah. The Umayyads sought to obliterate ᶜAlī's role and to deprive him of any legitimate right to the caliphate. The Shīᶜīs counter-claimed that ᶜAlī's right to the caliphate was inscribed in the scrolls of the prophets (ᶜUṭāridī 1993, Vol 1, p. 322).

In fact, the Shīᶜīs were not alone in their praise and love for ᶜAlī; many Sunnīs shared these, and held ᶜAlī's qualities in respect and esteem. For the Sunnīs too ᶜAlī was the Prophet's cousin, his son-in-law, and the fourth caliph.

They also considered him one of the people of "prio and "precedence" because he was among the first to ac Islām and to believe in Muḥammad's message and prophecy.

ᶜALĪ B. ABĪ ṬĀLIB'S ASSASSINATION

After ᶜAlī's bitter conflict with his opponents of Banū Umayyaḥ, headed by Muᶜāwiyaḥ b. Abī Sufyān (d. 680 CE), some left him; others turned against him following the battle of Ṣiffīn (657) and the incident of arbitration. ᶜAlī's power continued to shrink, and he had to withdraw to Kufa helplessly, without influence in the other large Islāmic cities. By contrast, the Umayyads were increasing their power and influence and attracting more supporters in all the other areas of the Islāmic state.

ᶜAlī's attempt to draw the Ḫawārij to his side on the pretext of fighting Muᶜāwiyaḥ and his opponents did not succeed, so they were accused of being disbelievers.[1] He attacked them heavily in the battle of Nahrawān (658) and destroyed them. However, things did not end there. The Ḫawārij continued their hatred and malice against ᶜAlī and Muᶜāwiyaḥ alike, though their ire at ᶜAlī was greater than at Muᶜāwiyaḥ, especially after the battle of Nahrawān (658).

It is probable that ᶜAlī's destruction of the Ḫawārij in Nahrawān motivated three of them to meet at Mecca after

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Editors' note: Actually it was the Ḫawārij who accused Imām ᶜAlī, not to mention Muᶜāwiyaḥ, of being disbelievers. Imām ᶜAlī on the other hand is famous for having said that the Ḫawārij were neither *disbelievers* (*kāfirūn*) nor *hypocrites* (*munāfiqūn*); rather they were *strayers and deviants* (*māriqūn*): "They fly ruthlessly from the way of Allāh like an arrow flies from a bow." يَمرُقُونَ مِن دِينِ ٱللهِ كَمَا يَمرُقُ ٱلسَّهمُ مِنَ ٱلقَو

the pilgrimage in 660 and plan to murder ᶜAlī (d. 661), Muᶜāwiyah̄ (d. 680), and ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜĀṣṣ. Their aim was to end the political conflict and the years-long civil war, among whose victims they, the Ḫawārij, were. At their meeting the three Ḫawārij discussed the conditions of the people and found their rulers' behavior shameful. They recalled their casualties at Nahrawān (Nuwayrī 1975, Vol. 20,p. 205), and plotted the assassinations noted above (Ḥaytamī 1994, Vol. 9, p. 193). It is related that ᶜAbdu ãl-Raḥmān b. Muljam rose and said, "I will kill ᶜAlī" (Mubarrad 1994, Vol. 2, p. 597); then al-Ḥajjāj b. ᶜAbdillāh al-Sarīmiyy (d. 660), nicknamed "al-Burak," stood up and said, "I am for Muᶜāwiyah̄"(Ibn Kaṯīr 1988, Vol. 4, p. 38). According to another tradition the one who undertook to kill Muᶜāwiyah̄ was called Nazzāl b. ᶜĀmir (Dīnawrī 1995, p. 197). The third, ᶜAmr b. Bakr (d. 660), rose and said, "I will kill ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜĀṣṣ" (Ibnu ãl-Aṯīr 1979, Vol. 3, p. 389). Another tradition states that the one who assumed responsibility for killing ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜĀṣṣ was called ᶜAbdullāh b. Mālik al-Ṣīdāwī (Dīnawrī 1995, p. 197). The three men selected 17 Ramadān 661 as the day of the killing (Ṭabarī 1879, Vol. 4, p. 110), although another tradition puts the date at 21 Ramaḍān (Mubarrad 1994, Vol. 2, p. 597).

Each man travelled to the city where his target lived. ᶜAbdu ãl-Raḥmān b. Muljam went to Kufa where he met his Ḫawārij friends. He visited each in turn telling them of his secret mission (Ibnu ãl-Aṯīr 1979, Vol. 4, p. 119). He kept it until he met a woman from the Ḫawārij called Qaṭām whose father and brother were killed in Nahwaran. Qaṭām was very beautiful and Ibn Muljam expressed his wish to marry her. Qaṭām agreed, but set the conditions of 3000 *drachma* (*dirham*) and the murder of ᶜAlī b. Abī Tālib

as a dowry (Qurṭubī 1995, Vol. 3, p. 218). They married after he told her about the secret of his coming to Kufa. He told her about his intention to kill ᶜAlī on a specific and agreed date. She encouraged and helped him, and enlisted the aid of a relative, Mujāšiᶜ b. Wardān b. ᶜAlqamah. They were joined by a third, called Šabīb b. Bajrah (d. 660) (Ibnu āl-Aṯīr 1979, Vol. 3, p. 389).

On the appointed night the three took their poisoned swords and sat opposite the door through which ᶜAlī left to pray. As ᶜAlī came out, calling: *Come to pray! Come to pray!* Šabīb approached him and struck at him with his sword, but he missed his target. Then Ibn Muljam struck him on his head and said, "The rule is for God, O ᶜAlī, not for you and your friends!" (Ibnu āl-Aṯīr 1979, Vol. 3, p. 389).[2]

ᶜALĪ'S PREMONITION OF HIS ASSASSINATION

Most of the Sunnī and Shīᶜī early and later sources on ᶜAlī's murder stated that ᶜAlī knew without any doubt that he was going to be killed, and that he would be killed by ᶜAbdu āl-Raḥmān b. Muljam. A tradition related by a companion of the Prophet says that he said to ᶜAlī (Ibnu āl-Aṯīr 1970, Vol. 4, p. 116),

> *You will not die until you receive a blow on this that makes this red [he pointed at his forehead and beard] and the most wretched one will kill you, in the*

[2] See also Nuwayrī (1975, Vol. 20, p. 209), Ibn Kaṯīr (1988, Vol. 7, p. 339), Ibn Saᶜd (1903, Vol. 3, p. 34), Mubarrad (1994, Vol. 2, p. 598), Ibn Qutaybah (1990, Vol. 1, p. 180), Dīnawrī (1995, p. 198), Ṭabarī (1879, Vol. 4, p. 111), Hayṯamī (1994, Vol. 9, p. 194), Balāḏurī (1996, Vol. 3, p. 255), and Ibn Abī āl-Dunyā (1991, pp. 30–33).

same way as the most wretched one of Banū Ṯamūd wounded God's she-camel.

According to another tradition also related to the Prophet, he said to ᶜAlī (Hayṯamī 1994, Vol. 9, p. 187),

> You are a man leaving his place for others and you are to be killed, and this [pointing at his beard] will be dyed with blood from this [pointing at his forehead; meaning his beard would be bloodied from his head].

ᶜAlī used to repeat this sentence many times,

لَتُخَضَّبَنَّ هٰذِهِ مِنْ هٰذِهِ.

This one [beard] will be dyed red from this [forehead].

He also gave as witness the following verses (Ibnu ãl-Jawzi 1968, Vol. 1, p. 129) (Mubarrad 1994, Vol. 2, p. 599):

أُشْدُد حَيَازِيمَكَ لِلْمَوتِ فَإِنَّ الْمَوتَ آتِيكَا؛

وَ لَا تَجْزَعْ مِنَ الْقَتلِ إِذَا حَلَّ بِوَادِيكَا.

[ᶜAlī speaks to himself saying:]
Prepare *yourself bravely to face Death,*
Death is coming to you;
And don't be *afraid and sad*
if it alights in your valley (comes to you).

Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 952) quoted in his Musnad another *ḥadīṯ* that gives the same meaning in a different way (Ibn Ḥanbal 1971, Vol. 2, p. 802–03). Some sources mention many traditions that imply that ᶜAlī had seen his murderer and

knew him but let him live despite his knowledge and belief that he was the one who would kill him. The sources imply that ᶜAlī believed in God's will and judgment. When Ibn Muljam was coming to him, he used to say (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 193):[3]

أُرِيدُ حَيٰوتَهُ وَ يُرِيدُ قَتلِي؛ عَذِيرُكَ مِن خَلِيلِكَ مِن مُرَادٍ.

I want his life (I want him to stay alive) and
he wants my killing;
You have no excuse for your friend's from
Murād tribe.

Moreover, in his sleep ᶜAlī had several times seen the Prophet, who told him that the end of his life had arrived. His end was approaching and his death was imminent (Rāwandī 1991, Vol. 1, p. 233).

Ibnu āl-Athīr tells this story. When the month of Ramaḍān came, ᶜAlī walked one evening to visit al-Ḥasan, one evening to visit al-Ḥusayn, and one evening to visit Abū Jaᶜfar. After eating not more than three mouthfuls, he said: "I would like God's order (death) while I am hungry." No more than a night or two passed before his killing took place (Ibnu āl-Aṯīr 1979, Vol. 3, p. 388).

Other sources mention that while he was going out during the night of his killing, ᶜAlī came across some geese cackling. He said to the people of his house, "Let them; they are mourners" (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 198) (Ibn Abī āl-Dunyā 1991, p. 24). The meaning is, "Let the geese cackle because they are mourning my death which will come soon." Majlisī (d.1700) adds, "ᶜAlī announced his own

3 See also Ḫawārizmī (1965, p. 284), Qurṭubī (1995, Vol. 3, p. 220).

death in one of his speeches and his killing" (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 193). The Shīᶜī sources add that ᶜAlī also knew the place of his grave (Ibn Ṭāwūs n.d., pp. 29–35).

THE BURIAL OF IMĀM ᶜALĪ B. ABĪ ṬĀLIB

The sources we possess say that ᶜAlī died at the moment ᶜAbdu ãl-Raḥmān b. Muljam struck him with his poisoned sword (Ṭabarī 1879, Vol. 2, p. 330) (Aṣbahānī 1988, Vol. 1, p. 292). The popular view, which is far more frequent in the sources, is that ᶜAlī did not die immediately; he remained alive, suffering for two or three days at most. He remained alive during Friday and Saturday and died on Sunday evening (Ḏahabī 1997, Vol. 3, p. 650).[4] An interesting story that many sources relate is that a skilled doctor from Iraq tried to treat ᶜAlī in an attempt to stop the spread of poison in his body. But he failed, and left ᶜAlī fighting against time till he breathed his last in his bed at his home in Kufa (Ibn Abī ãl-Dunyā 1991, p. 40) (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 23). After his death his sons washed the body and his eldest son, al-Ḥasan, prayed over him. The sources differ on the number of times he said "Allāhu Akbar" in his praying. Some say he said it four times, others nine (Ibnu ãl-Aṯīr 1970, Vol. 4, p. 122).[5] Some sources give different versions (Hayṯamī 1994, Vol. 9, p. 198) (Ṭabarī 1879, Vol. 4, p. 114).

The burial of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is clouded in obscurity. As we know, ᶜAlī is considered the first caliph whose burial

[4] See Masᶜūdī (1997, Vol. 2, p. 347), Ibnu ãl-Jawzī (n.d., p. 178), Balāḏurī (1996, Vol. 3, p. 265), Ibn Qutaybaẖ (1990, Vol. 1, p. 181), Ibn Saᶜd (1903, Vol. 3, p. 35), Ibnu ãl-Aṯīr (1970, Vol. 4, p. 120), Mubarrad (1994, Vol. 2, p. 599), and Ḫawārizmī (1965, p. 284).

[5] See also Ibn Saᶜd (1903, Vol. 3, p. 35), Balāḏurī (1996, Vol. 3, p. 257).

was concealed from the people. The early Sunnī and Shīᶜī sources are unanimous in saying that ᶜAlī's burial was held late at night, for fear that the people might know the place of his grave. As a further precaution, his family concealed the location of his grave and kept the secret to themselves as best as they could (Ibn Abī āl-Dunyā 1991, pp. 62–64).[6] We found only one ancient source relating a tradition that a crowd of people had attended the modest process of burial. This is an isolated tradition; the commonly accepted one is that the process of burial took place before the morning prayer and ᶜAlī's grave was concealed from the eyes of the people (Balāḏurī 1996, Vol. 3, p. 257).

In my view, the chief motive behind the concealment of the process of burial and the location of the grave was ᶜAlī's request before his death. He might have been concerned that the Ḫawārij and Banū Umayyah would exhume his body, and this might impel his sons and his supporters to war. This could cause more schisms and fighting, and the shedding of Muslim blood.

The early Shīᶜī sources clearly reveal the great fear of ᶜAlī and his family of the audacity of Banū Umayyah, on the one hand, and the Ḫawārij on the other. They were afraid that they would dig up the grave and violate the body if they knew its whereabouts. Ibn Kaṯīr says, "He was buried at the *Qaṣru āl-Imārah* (*Palace of the Governor*) in Kufa for fear that the Ḫawārij might dig up the grave and take out his body and violate it" (Ibn Kaṯīr 1988, Vol. 7, p. 342). Al-Ṭabarsī states, "According to his will, the place of his burial was concealed in that place, because he knew

[6] See also Ibn Qutaybah (1990, Vol. 1, p. 181), Ṭabarī (1953, Vol. 2, p. 330), Ibnu āl-Aṯīr (1970, Vol. 4, p. 122), and Ibnu āl-Jawzī (n.d., p. 178).

about the Umayyad state after him" (Ṭabarsī 1979, p. 162). Similar traditions are mentioned in other sources.[7]

The intuition of ᶜAlī and his family was undoubtedly right. Muᶜāwiyaẖ b. Abī Sufyān and other Umayyad caliphs knew no bounds in besmirching the name of ᶜAlī and his family. They also went to excessive lengths in persecuting them at different places and times during the Umayyad caliphate.

There is another tradition by Majlisī, related to al-Ḥāriṯ b. Ḥasīra. The police commander of al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Ṯaqafī dug several holes in the ground in Kufa looking for ᶜAlī's body. Finally, he found the body of an old man with a white beard. He told al-Ḥajjāj about it but al-Ḥajjāj ordered him to return it to its place because al-Ḥajjāj said that al-Ḥusayn had moved the body to Medina and buried it there (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 329).

If we accept this tradition, we must conclude that the plan which ᶜAlī's family devised achieved its goal of creating the impression of confusion around a variety of places in which or around which ᶜAlī was buried. For example, the Shīᶜīs say that ᶜAlī asked his sons before his death to dig graves in several places, and that ᶜAlī chose one of them before he died. Thus ᶜAlī ensured concealment of the place of his grave. Ibn Ṭāwūs says (Ibn Ṭāwūs n.d., p. 36) (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 214),

> ᶜAlī ordered his son al-Ḥasan to dig four graves in four places: in the mosque, in Raḥbaẖ, in Ġariyy, and in the house of Juᶜdaẖ b. Hubayraẖ. By this

[7] See for example: Ibn ᶜAsākir (1980, Vol. 3, p. 377), Kanjī (1970, p. 471), Ḏahabī (1997, 1–2:636), and Rāwandī (1991, Vol. 1, p. 234).

means he wanted none of his enemies to know about the location of his grave.

Actually, this tradition does not express categorically the differences concerning the location of ᶜAlī's grave. The sources that have reached us mention more than one place. However, I sought to expose the reasons for such differences by examining the various versions of the traditions and testing their credibility.

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL IN AL-ṬAWIYYAH[8]

Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Ibn ᶜAsākir convey this tradition: "Al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī carried his father and buried him in al-Ṭawiyyah." But neither historian related it to any source, which indicates its weakness (Ibn ᶜAsākir 1980, Vol. 3, p. 378) (Baġdādī 1931, p. 138). I found no connection between al-Ṭawiyyah and ᶜAlī's grave in other sources.

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL IN AL-KUNĀSAH[9]

Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baghdādī and al-Balādhurī mention that ᶜAlī's grave is in al-Kunāsah, but they do not relate this tradition to any source. Because al-Kunāsah is a dunghill, and because of the weakness of the tradition, I find it hard to accept this view; I doubt that al-Kunāsah would be deemed a proper place to bury a respected Islāmic personage such as ᶜAlī.

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL IN QAṢRU ĀL-IMĀRAH

Some sources mention that ᶜAlī's grave is in *Qaṣru āl-Imārah* (*the governor's palace*) in Kufa. This is the site

[8] About al-Ṭawiyyah see Ḥamawī (1979, Vol. 2, p. 87).
[9] About al-Kunāsah see Ḥamawī (1979, Vol. 4, p. 481).

of the center of government. Ibn Taymiyyah says, "It is commonly known among the people of knowledge that ᶜAlī was buried at the Palace of the Government in Kufa, as Muᶜāwiyah was buried in Qaṣru āl-Imārah in Syria, and ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜAṣṣ was buried in Egypt, for fear that the Ḫawārij might dig up their graves" (Ibn Taymiyyah 1987, Vol. 5, p. 367). Ibn Taymiyyah's assumption is certainly reasonable, though he ignored or forgot that ᶜAlī's enemies were not only from the Ḫawārij but from the Umayyads too.

Other historians such as al-Yāfiᶜī, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn Qutaybah concur with Ibn Taymiyyah that ᶜAlī was buried in Qaṣru āl-Imārah (Ibn Qutaybah 1990, Vol. 1, p. 181),[10] but these traditions do not define the place of burial accurately. Al-Ṭabarī says in his tradition, "He was buried at Masjidu āl-Jamāᶜah (the Mosque of the Group) at Qaṣru āl-Imārah" (Ṭabarī 1879, Vol. 4, p. 117). However, al-Yāfiᶜī says, "And he was buried at Qaṣru āl-Imārah at the Mosque" Yāfiᶜī (1997, Vol. 1, p. 89). Add to them Ibn Qutaybah (Ibn Qutaybah 1990, Vol. 1, p. 181). Even Ibn Kaṯīr, who gave more weight to the view that ᶜAlī was buried in Qaṣru āl-Imārah and made it famous, notes other traditions referring to different places (Ibn Kaṯīr 1988, Vol. 7, p. 342).

While some historians distinguish the two places, others refer to them as one. For example, Ibnu āl-Jawzī, al-Nuwayrī, and Ibnu āl-Athīr distinguish Qaṣru āl-Imārah from the Mosque of Kufa (Nuwayrī 1975, Vol. 20, p. 217–18),[11] but Ibn ᶜAsākir and Ibn Qutaybah tend to treat

[10] See also Ṭabarī (1879, Vol. 4, p. 117), Yāfiᶜī (1997, Vol. 1, p. 89).

[11] See also Ibnu āl-Jawzī (n.d., pp. 178–79), Ibn Kaṯīr (1988, Vol. 3, p. 396).

the two as one place, uniting the *qaṣr* (*palace*) with the mosque (Ibn ᶜAsākir 1980, Vol. 3, p. 378) (Ibn Qutaybah 1981, p. 209). However, this confusion of places is not limited to the Qaṣr and the Mosque or Dāru āl-'Imārah; it extends to other places in Kufa such as al-Raḥbah and al-Suddah. Ibn Sa'd combines Masjidu āl-Jamāᶜah (the Mosque of the Group) and al-Raḥbah (Ibn Saᶜd 1903, Vol. 3, p. 35). Al-Nuwayrī distinguishes them and considers al-Raḥbah a Masjidu āl-Jamāᶜah (Nuwayrī 1975, Vol. 20, p. 218). Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī says, "Al-Qaṣr is not al-Raḥbah" (ᶜAsqalānī 1994, Vol. 7, p. 287).

So no agreement exists among the traditions that al-Raḥbah is the place where ᶜAlī was buried. There is also disagreement as to the exact location of al-Raḥbah. Is it the "Raḥbah of the Mosque" or "Raḥbah of the Qaṣru āl-Imārah"?

As for al-Suddah, al-Balādhurī points out that this is the place where ᶜAlī was buried (Balāḏurī 1996, Vol. 3, p. 257), but al-Balādhurī's tradition is the only one that is not ascribed to a reliable authority. Nor does this source define al-Suddah as a geographical place with specific features. He does not tell us which Suddah he means exactly: is it the Suddah from which ᶜAlī departed when he was killed, or is it another Suddah unconnected to the first (Ibn Kaṯīr 1988, Vol. 7, p. 339)?

Finally, we note that the differences among traditions stem from the weakness in ascriptions and weakness of the texts in definition and specification.

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL AT THE HOUSE OF JUᶜDAH B. HUBAYRAH

Juᶜdah was from Qurayš of the Banū Maḫzūm. He was ᶜAlī's nephew, son of his sister Umm Hani' bint Abī Ṭālib.

Juᶜdaẖ was the governor of Ḫurāsān during ᶜAlī's caliphate. He lived in Kufa where he owned houses (Ibnu āl-Aṯīr 1970, Vol. 1, p. 340). Some sources mention that al-Hasan b. ᶜAlī said, "I buried my father ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in a chamber of one of the houses of Juᶜdaẖ b. Ḥubayraẖ" (Ibn ᶜAsākir 1980, Vol. 3, p. 375).[12] ᶜAlī is also said to have appointed Juᶜdaẖ as his successor and vicegerent after Ibn Muljam struck him with his sword (Qurṭubī 1995, Vol. 20, p. 210).

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL AT THE HOUSE OF YAZĪD B. ḪĀLID[13]

Ibn ᶜAsākir, Ibn Kaṯīr, and al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baghdādī, referring to the same authority and text, state that a person called Ḫālid b. ᶜAbdullāh wished to excavate the foundations for the house of his son Yazīd. During the work he found the body of a *šayḫ* (*old man*) with a white beard and white hair. The body was still soft as if it had been buried the day before. He wanted to burn the body, but he suddenly stopped after he became convinced it was ᶜAlī's. He wrapped it in its shrouds again, and replaced it in its original place (Ibn ᶜAsākir 1980, Vol. 3, pp. 375–376).[14]

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL IN MEDĪNA

There is no doubt that ᶜAlī's assassination occurred at Kufa. As for the place of his burial we feel that we know more than the ancients. One of the traditions says that ᶜAlī's body was carried to Medina in Ḥijāz and buried in al-Baqīᶜ cemetery, where the Prophet, and his companions,

[12] See also Baġdādī (1931, Vol. 1, p. 136), Ibn Kaṯīr (1988, Vol. 7, p. 343).
[13] (Zirikli 1986, Vol. 2, p. 297).
[14] See also Baġdādī (1931, Vol. 1, p. 137), Ibn Kaṯīr (1988, Vol. 7, p. 343).

were buried, as was ᶜAlī's wife, Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter. Thomas Forster confirms this view. He visited Medina in the 16th century and in his description of the city, he says (Hakluyt n.d., Vol. 3, p. 195):

> Beyond the mosque of the Prophet, there are two graves covered with green curtains; in one of them Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter is buried and in the other ᶜAlī, her husband, is buried.

This view was confirmed by more than one of the early historians (Ḏahabī 1987, Vol. 3, p. 651).[15] Kanjī added in his book *Kifāyatu āl-Ṭālib* that ᶜAlī commanded that he be buried in Medina with his wife Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (Kanjī 1970, p. 470). In a tradition by al-Balādhurī, it is implied that al-Ḥusayn and not al-Ḥasan was the one who carried his father's body to Medina, and that was after the signing of the "peace agreement" between his brother al-Ḥasan and Muᶜāwiyah in 661 (Balāḏurī 1996, Vol. 3, pp. 257–258).

I maintain that the burial of ᶜAlī's body in Medina could not have been an easy task or a mission that could be concealed or hidden. We must add two more factors. First, Islām as a religion ordered its believers to bury the body as soon as possible after death. Second, to transport the body from Kufa to Medina would have taken many days in that age, and carrying the body across the desert in a harsh climate would certainly cause it to decay. The members of ᶜAlī's family were no doubt aware of this fact, being desert dwellers. They would be presumably be very careful about the safety of the body. On the other hand, the protection of the body from their enemies, Banū Umayyah

[15] See also Ḏahabī (1997, 1–2:637), Baġdādī (1931, Vol. 1, p. 137), and Ibnu āl-Jawzī (1995, Vol. 3, p. 417).

and the Ḥawārij, for the prolonged journey would be no simple mission.

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL IN THE LAND OF ṬAYᵓ AND THE STORY OF THE WANDERING CAMEL

Some people from the tribe of Ṭayᵓ claimed that they came across a stray camel in the desert during the night of ᶜAlī's burial. It had a box on its back, which the people of Ṭayᵓ thought contained gold and money. They pursued the animal and caught it, but when they discovered that the box contained a dead body, they buried it and slaughtered the camel and ate it. The news spread around and reached Banū Umayyah, who believed it. In this context, al-Walīd b. ᶜUqbah (Yaᶜqūbī 1960, Vol. 2, p. 178) composed some lines of poetry:

فَإِن يَكُ قَد ضَلَّ ٱلبَعِيرُ بِمَحمَلِهِ

فَمَا كَانَ مَهدِيًّا وَ لَا «كَانَ» هَادِيًا.

If the camel lost its way with its load on
it was not apt to be guided or be guide.

More than one historian has mentioned this tradition (Ibn ᶜAsākir 1980, Vol. 3, pp. 387–388).[16]

My view is that this story is unbelievable, because ᶜAlī's family would not have allowed the camel to go astray or permit Banū Ṭayᵓ to do such a thing to ᶜAlī's body. If this had happened, most people would know ᶜAlī's burial place, not Banū Ṭayᵓ only. It would be only natural for people to have learned of the event then. We recall that Banū Ṭayᵓ

[16] Baġdādī (1931, Vol. 1, p. 138), Masᶜūdī (1997, Vol. 2, p. 347), and Ibn Kaṯīr (1988, Vol. 7, p. 342).

lived scattered over many places, some in Ḥijāz, some in Iraq, and some in Syria. Ibn Kaṯīr confirms this view: "He who said that ᶜAlī's body was carried by his camel that went astray made a mistake and claimed to know what he did not know and this cannot be accepted by any reason or law"(Ibn Kaṯīr 1988, Vol. 7, p. 342).

ᶜALĪ'S BURIAL IN NAJAF IN IRAQ

Despite the different views about the place of ᶜAlī's burial, the Shīᶜī scholars in general agree that ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the fourth caliph and the first of the imāms, was buried in Najaf, four miles from Kufa. This is the prevailing belief of the common people (Donaldson 1946, p. 70). Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 693), a Shīᶜī theologian, wrote a book confirming the burial of ᶜAlī's body at al-Ġariyy in Najaf. He called his book *Farḥaṯu āl-Ġariyy* and he mentioned a number of the traditions that reinforce the claim that ᶜAlī was buried in Najaf. (These traditions are discussed below.) Ibn Ṭāwūs relates one tradition to Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq, in which he relates that when he went to al-Ḥīraẖ he used to visit ᶜAlī's grave at al-Ġariyy in Najaf, pray at it throughout the night, and leave at dawn. This is a reference to their keeping the place secret and their avoidance of revealing it to the common people (Ibn Ṭāwūs n.d., 56–58).

Several ancient and modern historians tend to accept this view, which considers al-Ġariyy or Najaf near Kufa as the place where ᶜAlī was buried. Ibn Abī āl-Ḥadīd discusses the different views about ᶜAlī's burial place and confirms that it is at al-Ġariyy. He says (Ibn Abī āl-Ḥadīd 1998, Vol. 1, p. 17),

> And his grave [ᶜAlī's grave] is at al-Ġariyy. The controversies among the possessors of Ḥadīth, that

his body was carried to Medina or that it was buried in the Raḥbah of the Mosque, or at the door of Qaṣru āl-Imārah in Kufa, or that the camel that carried it went astray in the desert and was taken by the Arabs who dwell in the desert - all these views are false; his sons [ᶜAlī's sons] know more about his grave and the sons of most people know more about the graves of their fathers than foreigners. This is the grave, which his sons visited when they came to Iraq. One of them was Jaᶜfar b. Muḥammad, peace be upon him, and others of the dignitaries and notables of the people.

Many of the Shīᶜī and Sunnī authors confirm this view (Iṣfahānī 1990, p. 42),[17] and Šayḫ al-Mufīd adds (Mufīd 1995, Vol. 1, p. 24) (Rāwandī 1991, Vol. 1, p. 234),

A group of those who accepted the view of ᶜAlī's burial in Najaf mentioned that he requested this before his death; and he told the members of his family to be satisfied with carrying the rear of the coffin because the angels would carry its front. This indicates that the burial place of ᶜAlī was known to the angels, and God had defined its location. It was said also that ᶜAlī told them that he would be brought to al-Ġariyy to be buried there.

Some authors exaggerated this information by saying that a horseman walked towards the procession of the funeral

[17] See also Ibn Šahrᵓāšūb (1991, Vol. 2, p. 387), Kūfī (1992, Vol. 1, p. 509), Ḫawārizmī (1965, p. 284), Ibnu āl-Wardi (1969, Vol. 1, p. 164), Abū āl-Fidāᵓ (1997, p. 190), Kanjī (1970, p. 471), and Ibn ᶜAsākir (1980, Vol. 3, p. 377).

and argued with ᶜAlī's sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. After he disclosed his secret, it was found out that it was ᶜAlī himself, since he said: "He witnesses every soul that dies; cannot he witness his own body?" (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, pp. 300–310) Some authors stated, "The people dug up his burial place at al-Ġariyy but they did not find anything in the grave" (Ṭabarsī 1979, p. 203).

Ibnu āl-Athīr, however, gave more weight to the view that ᶜAlī was buried in Najaf. He added that this place was visited and people were blessed by it (Ibnu āl-Aṯīr 1979, Vol. 3, p. 396). Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī and Ibn Baṭūṭah agreed with him on this (Ḥamawī 1979, Vol. 5, p. 271) (Ibn Baṭūṭah 1964, p. 176). Several traditions concern the revelation of ᶜAlī's grave in Najaf, some of them mentioned by al-Mustawfī in his book *Nuzhaṯu āl-Qulūb*:

> Two parasangs away to the northeast of Kufa is located the *mašhad* of ᶜAlīAmīru āl-Muˀminīn, which is known by the name *al-Mašhad al-Ġarawī*. [A mašhad is a place where a martyr has died or is buried.]

When ᶜAlī was fatally injured, he requested that after he died his body be carried on a camel. The camel should be set free and the place it stopped would be his burial place. They did as he desired; it happened that the camel knelt down at the place of the *mašhad* today, so ᶜAlī is buried there.

This story calls to mind the Prophet Muḥammad (Ṣ) when he emigrated from Mecca to Medina, where he was cordially received by the notables of the city who insisted that he stay with them. Then the Prophet said he would release the reins of his she-camel and he would follow it and

sojourn at the place where the she-camel knelt. The camel knelt at the tribe of Banū Mālik al-Najjār at Qubāʾ, and there was built the first mosque in Islām (Poonawala 1985, p. 642). Al-Mustawfī appears to seek connection between the first mosque in Islām and ʿAlī's *mašhad*. He implies that both of them are important and holy for Muslims. The Prophet Muḥammad gives freedom to his she-camel; similarly, ʿAlī gaves freedom to his she-camel to choose his grave. Why not? He is his heir!

The blessed place was not revealed during the rule of the Umayyad caliphate, or even during the Abbasid caliphate, until the reign Hārūn al-Rašīd (reigned 786–809).

Once during 791 Hārūn al-Rašīd chanced to go out hunting in this area. His horse raced after the prey. It bolted, and took shelter beside the grave but it could not enter. This event left an impression on Hārūn al-Rašīd. He asked the people about the place. They told him that it was ʿAlī's grave. Hārūn al-Rašīd gave orders to dig up the earth, and he found ʿAlī body stretched out. He had a dome built over it and people went to live nearby.

ʿALĪ'S BURIAL IN MAZAR-I SHARIF IN AFGHANISTAN

Some sources mention that ʿAlī's grave is in Mazar-i Sharif in the north of Afghanistan but they do not mention how ʿAlī's body arrived there and how it was buried. They, however, mention that the tomb of caliph ʿAlī in Mazar-i Shrif was discovered here and its genuineness declared to have been proved in 1480 during the reign of

the Timurid Sultan Ḥusayn.[18] The place became a *mazār place of pilgrimage*, which at once arose around the tomb with considerable market. The second tomb, which is still standing, (the first is said to have been destroyed by Genghis Khan),was built in 1481–2. The *mazār* does not seem to have been of any particular importance during the time of the Uzbeks and is hardly mentioned, although several Uzbek sultans were buried there. In the first half of the 19th century, the place was usually simply called Mazār by travellers; the name Mazar-i Sharif seems only to have arisen within the last hundred years (Bosworth 1960, Vol. 6, p. 942).

ᶜALĪ'S GRAVE AND THE GRAVES OF SOME OTHER PROPHETS

Above I gave more credence to the view that ᶜAlī was buried in Najaf (Ḥamawī 1979, Vol. 5, pp. 271–272), which is situated at the edge of the Western Desert in Iraq, west of Kufa. The Shīᶜīs have always worked to elevate the status of Najaf and the surrounding cities, especially Kufa, aiming at enhancing the position of ᶜAlī and of the other imāms buried in nearby areas of this hallowed ground. They intentionally sanctified it and narrated all kinds of related and unrelated traditions around it. Such traditions so reinforced its rank and status that it finally became one of the holiest places for the Shīᶜīs.

As for the mosque of Kufa, many stories have been told glorifying its virtues, but the Shīᶜīs were not content to make Kufa, its mosque, and the surroundings holy places.

[18] On the first discovery of the tomb of ᶜAlī see Ġarnaṭī (1925, pp. 145–148); and on the second discovery, Ḫwandamir (1855, Vol. 3, pp. 260–261).

They went beyond, and made it a great burial place for many prophets and saintly people.

Because ᶜAlī and other prophets are buried in Najaf, its soil has become sacred. It is the hope of every Shīᶜī in the world to be buried in the holy land of Najaf, so he will benefit from Ali's mediation on Judgment Day and so be restored to Paradise on Resurrection Day without being called to a reckoning. An interesting example to illustrate this belief is the burial of ᶜAḍūdu āl-Dawlah al-Buwayhī (d. 983), who died in Baghdād and asked to be buried in Najaf near ᶜAlī's grave. He was indeed buried there, and a special cemetery was built for him. Ibnu āl-Jawzī, the renowned historian, notes that the following words were carved on his grave (Ibnu āl-Jawzī 1995, Vol. 14, p. 30):

> This is the grave of ᶜAḍūdu āl-Dawlah and Tāju āl-Millah Abū Šujāᶜ b. Rukni āl-Dawlah. He loved to be near this infallible imām, wishing for his salvation when the time comes that every soul will have to defend itself. Thank God, and may his prayer be upon our Lord Muḥammad and his pure family.

The interment of ᶜAḍūdu āl-Dawlah al-Buwayhi in the area around Kufa and Najaf indicates the significance of this place. Let us bear in mind that ᶜAdūdu āl-Dawlah was a Shīᶜī, the first to make ᶜAlī's grave known after it was hidden in Najaf; it was he who built a dome over it. I do not argue that the position of Najaf was reinforced by the burial there of ᶜAḍūdu āl-Dawlah; the place was already considered holy. However, this burial is an additional indication of its importance and value in Shīᶜī eyes at that time. For the Shīᶜīs, it was the burial place of ᶜAlī, and of an entire group of prophets, messengers, and

famous persons who preceded him. This is a unanimous view taken by the early and late Shīᶜī theologians and jurisprudents alike.

Many traditions that the Shīᶜīs depend on were passed down through the years. Such traditions draw attention to the presence of many cemeteries for different prophets on the land of Najaf. Ibn Baṭūṭah̃, for example, describes ᶜAlī's grave (Ibn Baṭūṭah̃ 1964, p. 177):

> In the center under the dome, there is a square stone bench covered with wood that is covered with gold sheets with artful engravings and nailed with silver nails that hid the wood. It is less tall than a person's stature. There are three graves there. It is claimed that one of them is Adam's grave, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, and the second is Nūḥ's grave, may God's prayer and peace be upon him, and the third is ᶜAlī's grave, may God be pleased with him. Among the graves there are gold and silver tumblers filled with flower water and musk and all kinds of scents, where the visitor dips his hand and anoints his face with it for blessing.

As for the Shīᶜī sources, ᶜAbdu ãl-Karīm Ibn Ṭāwūs mentions in his book *Farḥaṭ̃u ãl-Ġariyy* the place of Adam's grave, citing a tradition by al-Mufaḍḍal b. ᶜUmar al-Juᶜfī (Ibn Ṭāwūs 1993, Vol. 2, pp. 85–86):[19]

> I came to ᶜAlī b. Abī ᶜAbdullāh [Jaᶜfar aḷ-Ṣādiq, the sixth imām], may peace be upon him, and said to him: "I would like to visit Amīru ãl-Muʾminīn [ᶜAlī]", and I said to him: "I miss al-Ġariyy." He

[19] See also Majlisī (1983, Vol. 11, p. 268), Sabzawārī (1993, pp. 71–72).

said, *Why do you miss it?* I said: I would like to visit Amīru ãl-Muʾminīn, peace upon him. He said: *Do you know the advantage of visiting him?* I said: No, son of the Messenger of God, unless you tell me. He said: *If you visit the grave of Amīru ãl-Muʾminīn, peace upon him, you should know that you are visiting Adam's bones and Nūḥ's body, and ʿAlī's body, peace upon him.* I said: Adam descended in Sarandeeb [Ceylon/Sri Lanka] at sunrise, and it is claimed that his bones are at the Kaʿbaẖ. How is it that his bones came to Kufa?

He said: *God, the Great and Almighty, inspired Nūḥ while he was on the ark [ship] to circumambulate the Kaʿbaẖ; He also inspired him and Nūḥ went down into the water, which reached his knees, and took out a coffin with Adam's bones, peace upon him, and carried it into the ark. He circled with it as long as God wanted and finally he came to the door of Kufa in the middle of its mosque. There, God said to the land, "O Earth! Swallow thy water and O Sky be cleared of clouds!" And the water was made to subside. And it [the ship] came to rest upon [the mount al-Jūdī] and it was said (Q.11:44): A far removal for wrongdoing folk!.*

The ship swallowed its water in the mosque of Kufa, and the people who were on the ship left. Then Nūḥ took the coffin of Adam and buried it in al-Ġariyy, which is part of the mountain on which God talked to Moses and made it holy and made Abraham God's friend and made Muḥammad his lover and made it a house for After Adam and Nūḥ, there is[20]

[20] English translation by Pickthall (n.d., p. 209).

> *no more noble one than Amīru ãl-Muʾminīn to be housed in it.*

This tradition, which is related by more than one Shīᶜī transmitter, means, despite some of its elements, that the Shīᶜīs accept the belief of Adam's existence in al-Ġariyy near ᶜAlī's grave. We have seen in this tradition that Adam, inspired by God, was first buried in holy Mecca, but his bones were moved by Nūḥ during the great flood to al-Ġariyy in Najaf, where ᶜAlī was buried after several centuries.

An association is evident between the Kaᶜbah and al-Ġariyy, which is not accidental. Sunnīs and Shīᶜīs agree that Adam's burial place is inside holy Mecca and its surroundings, but the Shīᶜīs add that his remains were moved from Mecca to al-Ġariyy because of the iniquity of the people of Mecca. God took revenge on them by changing the fresh water of Zamzam into salty water. God replaced it by the Furāt river (the Euphrates), which he made one of the rivers of Paradise, according to Shīᶜī sources.

Majlisī writes in his book *Biḥāru ãl-Anwār*, quoting Kulaynī's book Furūᶜu ãl-Kāfī, the following (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 11, p. 260):

> It is related from Abū Jaᶜfar, peace upon him, that between al-Rukn [the corner or angle where the Black Stone of the Kaᶜbah is] and al-Maqām [a small building near the Kaᶜbah in Mecca housing a stone with Abraham's footprints] there are graves of prophets and Adam is in God's holy place.

Another tradition was added to this (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 11, p. 267):

> And he was buried in Mecca and there are one thousand and five hundred years between Adam and Nūḥ, peace upon him.

The insertion of Nūḥ into this tradition was not accidental or unintentional. On the contrary: as I see it, Majlisī wished to prepare the ground for subsequent traditions that connect Adam and Nūḥ more profoundly. The Shīᶜīs describe this connection in detail, and it occupies a place in their thinking and religious attitudes. This is because Nūḥ has an additional role and contribution, which is discussed below.

The Shīᶜī sources are cautious in their traditions, aware of the importance of harmony between them and those of the Sunnīs. The tradition of Majlisī accords with the traditions of the Sunnīs, whose sources present two views concerning Nūḥ's burial. The first confirms the view that Adam's burial is in the environs of Mecca. This was related by al-Kisāᵓī in his book Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' (Kisāᵓī 1922, Vol. 1, p. 78):

> Then they buried it [Adam's body] in a hole where his head was in Kaᶜbaẖ and his legs stretched to their length.

Ibn Kaṯīr says,

> They disagreed on the question of the place of Adam's burial. The common view is that he was buried in the place of his fall in India, but it is said also on the mountain of Abū Qabīs in Mecca.

Al-Ṯaᶜlabī says,

> There is no agreement on his [Adam's] burial place. Ibn Isḥāq said that it is in East Paradise and others said it is in a cave in Abū Qabīs, which is called "the Great Cave." Abū Ṣāliḥ mentions that Ibn ᶜAbbās said, "Adam died on the mountain of Nūd in India."

Looking deeply into these traditions, we observe that they agree that Adam's grave is in Mecca or the surroundings, although they leave open the possibility that it might be in India. Ibn Kaṯīr mentions in his tradition that this is the common view. Yet he is not convincing, as he introduces this tradition as a possibility current among the people. Al-Masᶜūdī confirms this (Masᶜūdī 1997, Vol. 1, p. 46).

On the other hand, another tradition was mentioned by more than one authoritative Sunnī Muslim historian and classifier. This tells that Adam was buried in Mecca first, but his body was moved to another place, and he who moved it was Nūḥ. Al-Kisāʾī says (Kisāʾī 1922, Vol. 1, p. 93),

> When he finished his rites of pilgrimage, Nūḥ looked around and saw Adam's grave on the right side of Kaᶜbah, and he asked God to move that grave to his house then in a place in Kufa; Nūḥ returned from his pilgrimage and the ship descended from the air.

This tradition confirms the existence of Adam's grave in Mecca, specifically on the right side of the Kaᶜbah. However, it leaves us room to think about the possibility of the removal of his remains to Kufa.

A further tradition by Ibn Kaṯīr related by Ibn Jarīr says, "In the time of the flood, Nūḥ, peace upon him, carried Adam and Eve in a coffin to *Baytu ãl-Maqdis* (*Jerusalem*). Ibn ᶜAsākir related that Adam's head is at

Abraham's mosque and his legs are at the Rock of Baytu ãl-Maqdis" (Ibn Kaṯīr n.d., Vol. 1, p. 161). Aḹ-Ṯaᶜlabī mentions the same tradition (Ṯaᶜlabī 1954, p. 60):

> Ibn ᶜAbbās said that during the great flood, Nūḥ carried Adam's coffin in the ship and when he went out of it, he buried Adam in Baytu ãl-Maqdis. Adam died on Friday and Eve lived after his death for another year and was buried with Adam, peace upon him.

As we see, the two traditions agree on the general information that defines the specific place as "Baytu ãl-Maqdis" and the time of burial as after the event of the flood. What concerns us here is the idea of moving the remains or the grave to another place. The Shīᶜīs found a fertile land wherein to build traditions similar in all their details, which they designed through a selective and deliberate process.

What we have seen with regard to Adam's grave and its relation to ᶜAlī's grave applies to the graves of other prophets, chiefly Nūḥ's grave. Al-Ṭabarsī relates that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, ᶜAlī's sons, during their father's burial in Najaf in Kufa, and during their digging of the grave, found a ready-made grave especially prepared for him from the time of Nūḥ. Al-Ṭabarsī relates (Ṭabarsī 1979, pp. 202–203),

> When he [ᶜAlī] died, we [Ḥasan and Ḥusayn] took him out and we suddenly started to hear some noise and rustling till we arrived at al-Ġariyy. Suddenly we saw a shining rock. We dug and suddenly we found a wooden board of teak wood with the words: "This

is what Nūḥ, peace upon him, preserved for ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him."

Ibn Šahrᵓāšūb says (Ibn Šahrᵓāšūb 1991, Vol. 2, pp. 202–203),

> The grave broke down and a tomb appeared with the Syriac words written on it: "In the name of God, the Most Merciful: this is a grave that Nūḥ dug for ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Muḥammad's legal guardian, God pray for both of them, seven hundred years before the flood."

What concerns us about the above two traditions is the reference to and connection between ᶜAlī's grave and Nūḥ's grave. ᶜAlī's grave is not an ordinary one, like any other grave; it is a special grave that Nūḥ had dug and prepared seven centuries earlier.

On the esoteric level of these traditions, we see that there are other intentional means of perpetuation, referring specifically to Nūḥ rather than others. Nūḥ is considered one of the stout-hearted people, and is one of the five famous prophets: Nūḥ, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. The Shīᶜīs do not stop here; they elaborate in some of their sources with regard to the nature of the relation between ᶜAlī and Nūḥ. Some sources tell that ᶜAlī was buried in the same place as Nūḥ. Ibn Ṭāwūs mentions two traditions in this regard. The first states that Amīru ãl-Muᵓminīn ᶜAlī, peace upon him, was buried with his father Nūḥ (Ibn Ṭāwūs 1993, Vol. 2, p. 63). The second tradition says (Ibn Ṭāwūs 1993, Vol. 2, p. 83):

> ᶜAlī's grave is in al-Ġariyy between Nūḥ's head and his hairline is behind the dome.

As we see, the two traditions confirm categorically that ᶜAlī's grave exists in Nūḥ's grave.

However, the tradition transmitter Ibn Kaṯīr confirms that Nūḥ's grave exists in Mecca and nowhere else (Ibn Kaṯīr n.d., Vol. 1, p. 189):

> As for his [Nūḥ's] grave, peace upon him, Ibn Jarīr and al-Azraqī related from ᶜAbdu āl-Raḥmān b. Ṣābiṭ, the non-following: "Nūḥ's grave, peace upon him, is in Masjidu āl-Ḥarām." This view is more firmly based than the views of later transmitters stating that the grave is in a small town in the al-Biqāᵓ area in southern Lebanon, known today as Karak Nūh.
>
> (There is a mosque in this town, called *Karak Nūḥ*, lying north of the town of Zahleh in the Biqā' plain. In this mosque there is a long grave, which is said to be Nūḥ's grave, peace upon him. There were many endowments on it, which have been lost in the course of time.)

Ibn Kaṯīr adds that Nūḥ's grave is more likely to be in the Holy Mosque in Mecca (Ibn Kaṯīr n.d., Vol. 1, p. 190):

> If someone asks if there is any tradition concerning the location of Nūh's grave, peace upon him, the answer is "Yes." There is an non-related tradition given by Muḥammad b. Jaᶜfar al-Ṭabarī in his explanation of the Qurᵓānic verse: ***And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth*** (*Q* 2:30). He said, "And it was said: the earth that God mentions in this verse is Mecca."
>
> Al-Ṭabarī continues,

> Abū Ḥumayd related: Jarīr related from ᶜAṭāᵓ b. Ṣābiṭ, whose name is ᶜAbdu āl-Raḥmān, that the Prophet, God's prayers be upon him, said: *The earth of Mecca was spread and the angels circled the Kaᶜbah, and they were the first to circle it. It is the earth to which God called out, "There is a caliph (viceroy) in the land."* The Prophet said: *If his people were destroyed and he and the virtuous survived, he and they will come to it; they will worship God in it till they die. The graves of Nūḥ, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ and Šuᶜayb are between Zamzam and the Rukn [Corner].*

Clearly Ibn Kaṯīr prefers the view that says that Nūḥ was buried in Mecca, as he tells the traditions told by a companion of the Prophet and ascribed to the Prophet himself. Ibn Kaṯīr also accepts the view that the graves of other prophets besides Nūḥ are present in the earth of holy Mecca. He mentions Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, whose graves are in Najaf or Kufa according to the Shīᶜī belief. However, the Sunnīs argue that the graves are in the Holy Mosque of Mecca. Other sources say they are in Damascus or Yemen.

Al-Ṯaᶜlabī, quoting ᶜAbdu āl-Raḥmān b. Ṣābiṭ (Ṯaᶜlabī 1954, p. 83), mentions that

> Between al-Rukn wa āl-Maqām and Zamzam there are ninety-nine prophets; the graves of Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Šuᶜayb, and Ismāᶜīl, peace upon them, are in that spot.

Al-Kisāᵓī gives more weight to another view (Kisāᵓī 1922, Vol. 1, p. 207):

> Hūd and other believers left for Yemen, and he settled there and lived for two whole years there till he died and was buried in Hadramaut.

Ibn Kaṯīr mentions two places and prefers one place as the grave of Hūd, but not of Ṣāliḥ, as does al-Ṯaᶜlabī.

Ibn Kaṯīr deals with this point too (Ibn Kaṯīr n.d., Vol. 1, p. 207):

> It was related that Amīru āl-Muʾminīn mentioned Hūd's qualities, peace upon him, and his grave in the land of Yemen. Others mentioned that it is in Damascus and its mosque. Some people claim that its southern wall is Hūd's grave, peace upon him, and only God knows.

Contrary to all these traditions, others wholly agree that ᶜAlī was buried in Hūd's and Ṣāliḥ's grave, or beside them. In one of his traditions, related by al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī according to his grandfather Abū Ṭālib, Sabzawārī reports (Sabzawārī 1993, p. 72–73):

> I asked al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī, "Where did you bury Amīru āl-Muʾminīn, peace be upon him?" He said: *At the edge of the cliff. We passed by him at night at the mosque of al-Aš*ᶜ*aṯ, and he said: "Bury me beside my brother Hūd."*

This tradition seems strange, and it does not appear in other sources. How can Abū Ṭālib ask al-Ḥasan about the place of burying his son ᶜAlī, while we know that he [Abu

Ṭālib] died years before Hijraẖ in Mecca?[21] However, if we give a second thought to the tradition, we see that ᶜAlī asks his sons to bury him in Najaf of Kufa at a place called al-Ġariyy.

Another tradition mentioned by Majlisī is ascribed to Abū Matir (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 11, p. 379):

> When the dissolute Ibn Muljam, God damn him, struck ᶜAlī, peace upon him, al-Ḥasan asked his father: *Should I kill him?* ᶜAlī said: *No, but imprison him. If I die, kill him, and if I die, bury me in this part, in the grave of my brothers Hūd and Ṣāliḥ.*

We notice that in his tradition Majlisī places Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and ᶜAlī in one grave. He may wish to intimate that the three graves are adjacent in the same place. It is mentioned in more than one source that there is a grave of the prophets Hūd and Ṣāliḥ in the cemetery of Najaf on the northern side of the respected town. This is a well-known grave and a domed shrine that people visit to receive its blessings (Maḥbūbāẖ 1958, Vol. 1, p. 96).

The Shīᶜī authors concerning *al-mazār* (*visitations*) allocated special chapters that describe the manner of visiting the graves of Hūd, Adam, Nūḥ, and Ṣāliḥ (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 97, p. 251). Besides ᶜAlī's grave there are four others, a visit to which is obligatory for every Shīᶜī after performing the rites of visiting ᶜAlī's grave.

[21] *Editors' note:* I have not seen the tradition cited from (Sabzawārī 1993), but Majlisī does narrate the exact same tradition on the authority of one ᶜUmar al-Jurjānī (Majlisī 1983, Vol. 42, p. 218;Vol. 100, p. 239). This would seem to make much more sense; perhaps there is a typo or other mistake in Sabzawārī (1993).

Thus, we see how great ᶜAlī's status is for the Shīᶜīs. It seems that, for them, he is even more important than Adam, Nūḥ, Hūd, and Ṣāliḥ. The holiness of Najaf resulted first from ᶜAlī's holiness and second from the holiness of the other prophets buried there.

CONCLUSION

According to some sources, ᶜAlī foresaw his murder, its time and place, its manner, and the person who would kill him. However, he did nothing to prevent it because he believed that it was his destiny, decided by God. After his assassination by ᶜAbdu āl̃-Raḥmān b. Muljam al-Murādī in 661, his son al-Ḥasan prayed over him and wrapped his body in shrouds. He buried it secretly for fear that the Ḫawārij or Banū Umayyaḥ̃ might dig up the grave.

Several traditions exist about the place of ᶜAlī's burial. One relates that he was buried at aḷ̃-Ṯawiyyaḥ̃, but this is a weak tradition. Another says that he was buried at al-Kunāsaḥ̃, but I do not accept it. A third tradition argues that ᶜAlī was buried at Qaṣru āl-Imāraḥ̃ in Kufa or at Masjidu āl-Jamāᶜaḥ̃ in Qaṣru āl-Imāraḥ̃. We have shown that this tradition is weak too. A fourth tradition holds that he was buried in Juᶜdaḥ̃ b. Hubayraḥ̃'s house. A fifth tradition mentions that ᶜAlī was buried at Yazīd b. Ḫālid's house. A sixth tradition says that ᶜAlī was buried in Medina, but we have shown that this is far fetched, since the tradition argues that the body was carried from Kufa to Medina, which was a difficult journey in those days. A seventh tradition says that ᶜAlī's body was buried in the land of Ṭayʾ after it was found in a box on the back of a wandering camel. We have shown that this tradition is incorrect.

The commonly accepted view of the Shīᶜīs is that ᶜAlī is buried in Najaf. We tend to accept this view and give it more weight, because it is logical and more reasonable than the others. Besides, more than one narrator and authority support this view, as we have seen.

The Shīᶜī traditions also confirm that ᶜAlī's grave contains the remains of three prophets who were buried in the same grave, namely Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Nūḥ. The Shīᶜīs also believe that the holiness of the land of Najaf stems first from ᶜAlī's sanctity and second from the sanctity of the other prophets who were buried in it. For the Shīᶜīs, Najaf is a holy place comparable to the Kaᶜbah.

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"la fatā illā ʿAlī wa-lā sayf illā dhū al-faqār" There is no youth like ʿAlī, and no sword like Dhū al-faqār: Some observations on Ali's sword in Shī'ite[1] thought

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Abstract

The paper will deal with Dhū al-faqār sword in the Shīʿite tradition, According to the Shīʿite Dhū al-faqār sword was descended from Paradise together with Adam and was made of myrtle of Paradise.
Adam used it against his enenies, The paper will compares the significance of this sword both in Shīʿite and Sunni sources, The Shīʿite sources attribute to it miracles and wonders, claiming that it was able to talk to ʿAlī b. Abū Ṭālib in the same way the stick of Moses talked to him. Given this correlation between the sword of ʿAlī and the stick of Moses, ʿAlī in these sources is depicted as the heir of the Prophet Moses and proceeds in the way of the prophets. In the Sunnite tradition Dhū al-faqār sword was one of nine swords which the Prophet Muḥammad seized as booty from ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih in the battle of Badr (626 CE), and then presented it to his cousin ʿAlī.

Keyword: *ʿAlī, Shīʿite*, Sword, *Dhū al-faqār*.

Introduction

Swords have been known since antiquity in many regions of the world, as both a defensive and offensive weapon, and took different shapes among different nations.

In Arabic there are numerous names for the sword, which is considered the most honorable and most useful weapon in battle. In antiquity every Arab guarded his sword with care and almost never parted with it. It has been said that its name in Arabic is derived from the death which it causes.[2]

[1] The words "Shīʿite" and "Shīʿism" in this article refer to the Twelver or Imami sect.
[2] Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqāq*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn, Maktabat al-muthannā, 1st printing, Baghdad, 1979, 2: 531.

The pre-Islamic poet Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd (d. 564 CE) spoke as follows about the importance of the sword in battle:[3]

1.faʾālaytu lā yanfakku kashḥī bitanaṭan liʿaḍbin raqīqi al-shafratayni muhannadi

I swore that my hip would retain a slender two-edged sword made in India

2.ḥusāmin ʾidhā mā qumtu muntaṣiran bihi kafā al-ʿawda minhu al-badʾu laysa bimiʿḍadi

My hip remains a sheath for a sharp sword, with which I have victory with just one blow, with no repetition.

3.ʾakhī thiqatin lā yanthanī ʿan ḍarībatin ʾidhā qīla mahlan qāla ḥājizuhu qadī

Like a brother is the sharpness of the sword trusted, it does not rebound when it strikes. If it is told to slow down it says "I already attained my aim".

4. ʾidhā ʾibtadar al-qawmu al-silāḥa wajadtanī manīʿan ʾidhā ballat biqāʾimihi yadī.

If the people seek to compete with their arms, I find myself invincible, if my hand seizes the sword's hilt

Al-Ḥaṣīn b. Ḥumām al-Murrī (d. 612 CE) noted that a sword may prove useful where another weapon is ineffective:[4]

ʿashiyyata lā tughnī al-rimāḥu makanahā walā al-nablu ʾillā al-mashrifiyya al-muṣammamā.

When spears and arrows cannot be dispensed with, I find only the sharp sword.

Ibn Hudhayl al-Andalusī expresses himself in the same vein: "The sword makes other weapons superfluous, but in general other weapons do not make the sword superfluous, since it can serve instead of any other weapon".[5]

[3] Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd, *Dīwān Ṭārafa*, Dār ṣādir, Beirut, 1961, pp. 37-38.
[4] Al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍibbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, ed. by ʿUmar Fārūq, Dār al-arqam, 1st printing, Beirut, 1998, p. 54.
[5] Ibn Hudhayl al-Andalusī, *Ḥilyat al-fursān wa-shiʿār al-shujʿān*, Muʾassasat al-intishār al-ʿarabī, Beirut, 1997, p. 118.

It is said of the Arabs that they stabbed with it like a spear, struck with it like a club, cut with it like a knife and also used it as a whip. For them it was a beautiful ornament at the council of elders, a lamp in darkness, a companion in solitude, a bed-fellow in sleep and a fellow traveler on a journey. It was called a coat, a sash, a stick, a cloak and a dress, a "judge of battle" and "arbitrator among men", the "shadow of death", the "spittle of death" and "father of mire".[6] Bearing a sword became an emblem of honor among Arabs and one of the most important attributes of heroism. The manufacture of swords flourished since earliest times especially in Yemen, situated on the shipping lanes and frequented by vessels that carried wares from India.

However, the fall of the kingdom of Ḥimyar shortly before the advent of Islam, the annexation of Yemen to the Muslim state, and the flourishing of arms manufacture in the regions that came under control of the Arab conquerors such as Persia and Syria, brought about a decline in the prestige of Yemeni manufacture, especially of the sword industry, which had previously enjoyed unsurpassed fame.

Arabs also named swords according to their provenance, for example Indian swords, known for their high quality, and the renowned Damascene swords, which were so famous that when Timurlane (d.1405 CE) attacked Syria in 1401 he took with him the country's sword makers back to his own country. Another well-known type of sword was the "mashrafi", so called either because it was made in the "hills" (*mashārif*) of Damascus, or by a man named Mashraf, from Thaqīf. Baṣran swords were made in the city of Basra, Qulʿī swords in al-Qulʿa, Sulaymānī swords in al-Sulaymāniyya, Sarandībī swords in Sarandīb, and so on.[7]

The sword came to have even greater significance after the advent of Islam. The Quran contains several allusions to the sword, for example the following: "So when

[6] Ibid., p. 118.
[7] Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī, *al-Suyūf wa-ajnāsuhā*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Zakī, Fuʾād I University, Cairo, 1952, pp. 8ff.

you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, then secure their bonds".[8]

"Striking the neck", according to one commentator, can only be done with the sword, and the fact that God chose it as the instrument of vengeance that Muslims are to use against the infidel, proves the superiority of the sword over other arms.[9]

It should not surprise us, therefore, that the sword was held in such high regard among Muslims, especially in light of the fact that the Muslim state was founded on the sword.

Arguably the most famous swords among Muslim Arabs were those possessed by the Prophet. The best-know of these was a sword that he took as booty from one of his enemies of the tribe of Quraysh in the Battle of Badr (624 CE). This sword, known as Dhū al-faqār, has received much attention due to the special qualities ascribed to it.

In this article we shall try to shed some light on this sword and describe how it has been dealt with in Shīʿī and Sunnī sources over the centuries.

Dhū al-faqār[10] in Shīʿism

A very popular slogan among Shīʿītes, one which today can be found inscribed on the walls of their mosques and *ḥusayniyya*s,[11] is the following: "There is no youth like ʿAlī, and no sword like Dhū al-faqār".

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[8] Q 47:4.

[9] Raḍiyy al-Dīn b. ʿAlī al-Ṭarṭūsī, *Tabṣirat arbāb al-albāb*, ed. by Kārīn Ṣādir, 1st printing, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1998, p. 37.

[10] The second word of this name is written either "faqār" or "fiqār". However, most sources have "a" as the first vowel. For more information see: Friedrich Wilhelm Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der alten Araber, aus ihren Dichtern dargestellt*, Leipzig, 1886, p. 152.

[11] A *ḥusayniyya* is a building in a Shīʿite community used for gatherings in the first ten days of the month of *muḥarram*, where the story of the death of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī is recited annually by a special "reciter" (*qāriʾ*). Today it is used for other religious purposes as well. See: Masoud Kheirabadi, *Iranian Cities: Formation and Development*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1993, p. 114; Khalid Sindawi, "The Husayni Sermon (al-Khutba al-Husayniyya) in Shi'ite Literature: Development, Structure, Venue, Preachers' Titles", *Orientalia Suecana*, Vol. 54 (2005), pp. 151-178.

This motto is echoed in numerous Shīʿite sources over the centuries. The reputation of Dhū al-faqār is in fact merely a reflection of the fame of its possessor, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, since a sword is nothing without its wielder. Sunnīs and Shīʿites are agreed that this sword is a legacy from the Prophet given into safekeeping to the Prophet's family and passed on from one of the twelve imams to the other. According to al-Kulaynī in his *al-Uṣūl*, he asked the imam Jaʿfar about a sealed book that had been turned over to Umm Salama. The imam answered: "God's Messenger when he died passed on to ʿAlī his knowledge and his weapon. From him it passed on to al-Ḥasan and then to al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon them, and when we feared we were about to be overcome, Umm Salama kept them. After that ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn took hold of them". The author then said: "Yes, and then they came into your father's possession and eventually into yours". He answered: "Yes".[12]

Al-Majlisī in his *Biḥār al-anwār* adds: "Jaʿfar's father the sixth imam said: 'For us this weapon is like the Ark of the Covenant was for the Children of Israel, which went wherever they went'. I then asked him about Dhū al-faqār, the sword of the Messenger of God, may God pray for him and give him peace, and he said: 'Gabriel brought it down from heaven; it is decorated in silver and I have it".[13]

These traditions show that it is the Shīʿite belief that Dhū al-faqār was handed down as a legacy from the Prophet, first to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and then from one imam to another, until the twelfth and last imam, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who disappeared in Sāmarrāʾ in the year 874 CE, and who is expected to reappear at the end of time and fill the earth with justice just as today it is filled with iniquity. The sword is thus used in Shīʿism as irrefutable testimony for the rightful status of their imams. Therefore

[12] Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 3rd printing, Tehran, 1968, 6:235.
[13] Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabī, 3rd revised printing, Beirut, 1983, 42:67.

they tried to attach as many legendary features to it as possible, which would reflect in turn on ʿAlī, who would thus be considered the equal of the prophets and the immortals.

Dhū al-faqār was turned into an imaginary object, far removed from reality. For example, al-Majlisī reports in the name of the Prophet: "Dhū al-faqār would speak with ʿAlī, may peace be upon him. One day ʿAlī wanted to break it but then the sword said to him: O Commander of the Faithful, Declined to do what you want, I have a commission, for the appointed time of idolatry has been postponed".[14] The sword is expected to speak again upon the return of the twelfth *ima*m, al-Mahdī, and urge him to kill God's enemies.[15] Clearly the idea of a talking sword is taken from Moses' staff, of which it is related that it spoke to Moses, and would warn him if he took a path on which he would encounter robbers.[16]

According to some traditions Moses' staff symbolizes the lordship that God granted to Adam after his fall, and the same is true of Dhū al-faqār, which symbolizes the authority that the Prophet Muḥammad granted ʿAlī.[17] Both the staff and the sword, so these traditions claim, originated in the Garden of Eden, were made of the leaves of the myrtle of Eden,[18] and descended to earth with Adam, where they were miraculously transformed into Moses' staff and Dhū al-faqār. Now Moses was a

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[14] Ibid.

[15] For more detail see: Etan Kohlberg, "The Development of the ʾImāmī Shīʿī Jihād Doctrine", *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 126, Wiesbaden, 1976, p. 79.

[16] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majlis*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya, Cairo, 1900, p. 156.

[17] For more on the view that Muḥammad bequeathed his authority to ʿAlī, see Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad As Viewed by the Early Muslims: A Textual Analysis*, The Darwin Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995, pp. 136-138, 222-254.

[18] According to Muslim tradition Adam in the Garden of Eden ate some wheat which remained in his teeth. He took a branch of myrtle as a toothpick, and was cast down to earth as he was picking his teeth. He passed the toothpick on to his descendants, until eventually it came to Moses, in whose hands it miraculously turned into a staff. For details see: Uri Rubin, *The Prophet Muhammad in Early Hadith Literature* (in Hebrew), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Tel-Aviv University, 1976, A:50. See also: ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn al-Shāfiʿī al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm al-ʿawālī fī anbāʾ al-awāʾil wal-tawālī*, ed. by al-Shaykh ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and al-Shaykh ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ, Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1st printing, 1998, 1:122.

prophet while ʿAlī was an imam; however, among Shīʿites the imams have the attributes of prophets and are considered to be their continuation.

This attempt by Shīʿism to forge a link between Moses and ʿAlī is but one in a series of comparisons in which the imams are presented as possessing the attributes of prophets.

Dhū al-faqār has been compared by Shīʿites only with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, as demonstrated in the well-known Shīʿite expression: "There is no youth like ʿAlī and no sword like Dhū al-faqār". Indeed, ʿAlī used this sword in most of his battles and raids, and was successful due to his great strength and his sword.

In this context we are told by al-Ṣadūq (d. 991 CE) the following tale, related in the name of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī: "Whenever the Commander of the Faithful was attacked under a banner, God overturned it and its owners suffered a humiliating defeat, while whenever the Commander of the Faithful struck anyone with his sword Dhū al-faqār that person never escaped. Whenever he, that is, ʿAlī, fought, Gabriel fought at his right Michael at his left and the angel of death in front of him".[19] ʿAlī would always have the sword with him when he delivered his sermons, that were famous for their counsel and wisdom. Thus al-Aṣbagh b. Nubāta (d. 718 CE) reports that when ʿAlī was caliph he would go out to the mosque wearing the Prophet's turban of clouds,[20] outer garment and shoes, and girding the Prophet's sword.[21]

The origin of the name Dhū al-faqār

There are different views on the origins of the name. According to some it was so named because it was engraved with a stripe in the middle along its length, which was

[19] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as al-Ṣadūq, *Āmālī al-Ṣadūq*, Muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, 5th printing, Beirut, 1990, p. 414.
[20] For more on the Prophet's turban of clouds see: Khalid Sindawi, *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature* (in Hebrew), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 2000, p. 109.
[21] Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, *Āmālī al-Ṣadūq*, p. 280.

in appearance similar to a man's spine,[22]while according to others the name originated from the fact that whoever was smitten with it by the Commander of the Faithful (ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib) was deprived (*iftaqara*, from the same root as *faqur*a) of his life in this world and of the afterlife after death.[23]

However, an objective perusal of the texts in which these conflicting opinions appear shows that they are not very reliable. Rather, they give the impression that these explanations were inventions based on flimsy considerations and aimed mainly at promoting the doctrinal interests of Shīʿism. According to some sources the sword originated in heaven, was brought down by the angel Gabriel, and possessed a silver handle,[24] while in another report which al-Majlisī relates in the Prophet's name the latter is quoted as saying "God, may He be blessed and exalted, gave me Dhū al-faqār, saying: 'O Muḥammad, take it and give it to the best man on earth'. I asked: 'Who is that, o God?', and He replied: 'My lieutenant on earth, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him'".[25]

Ibn Shahrāshūb has this to say about the sword's origin in his *Manāqib*: "God lowered Adam from the Garden of Eden with Dhū al-faqār, which was created out of leaves of the myrtle of the Garden. Adam used the sword to fight against jinn and devils. The sword had the following inscription: 'My prophets will continue to fight with it, one prophet after another and friend after another, until ʿAlī the Commander of the Faithful will inherit it and will use it to fight with and for the Prophet Muḥammad".[26]

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[22] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42:65. See also: E. Mittwoch, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, E. J. Brill, London, 1965, vol. II, p. 233, s.v. "Dhu'l Fakar"; G. Zawadowski, "Note sur l'origine magique de Dhou-l-faqar", in *Terre d'Islam*, 1943/I, pp. 36-40.

[23] Muḥāmmad b. ʿAlī b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, Dār al-aḍwāʾ, 2nd printing, Beirut, 1991, 3:339; see also: *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42:65.

[24] Ibid., 42:66.

[25] Ibid., 42:67.

[26] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3: 339.

After ʿAlī the sword was reportedly passed on from one imam to another until it reached the twelfth imam, and disappeared with him.[27]

According to another report it was brought down from Heaven to the Prophet, who gave it to ʿAlī. Yet another version claims that Gabriel ordered it to be made from an iron idol in Yemen, whereupon ʿAlī went there, smashed it and took two swords with him, Mukhaddim and Dhū al-faqār, which were stamped by ʿUmayr al-Ṣaqīl, and said to have been one of the presents which Bilqīs queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. It is furthermore related that it came into the Prophet's hand at the Battle of Badr (624 CE) after he took it from al-ʿĀṣ b. Munbbih al-Sahmī, whom he killed, and then he gave it to ʿAlī, or, according to another version, the Prophet took it from Manbah b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Sahmī, after he had killed him in the raid on Banū al-Muṣṭalaq. Yet another account claims the sword was made of palm leaves, that became a sword after the Prophet breathed on it.[28]

All these distinct and conflicting reports in Shīʿite sources concerning the sword's origins arouse some doubt concerning the authenticity of the famous saying "There is no youth like ʿAlī and no sword like Dhū al-faqār", which constitutes an important element in understanding the structure of the various traditions about the sword, its description and its origins on the one hand, and its possessor on the other. For this reason Shīʿite sources focus a great deal on this saying.

A renewed reading of the Shīʿite texts that deal with this saying provide the scholar with differing and even conflicting possibilities with respect to its chronological and geographical origins.

Some sources report that an angel from Heaven by the name of Raḍwān called out during the raid of Badr: "There is no youth like ʿAlī and no sword like Dhū al-

[27] For details see: Rubin, *The Prophet Muḥammad* (in Hebrew), ibid. See also: al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm*, op.cit.
[28] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, op.cit.

faqār".[29] Most sources, however, are almost uniformly in agreement that this call was made at the Battle of Uḥud (625 CE), not that of Badr. Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 1022 CE) reports that after the Muslims had finished the raid on Uḥud, when the infidels of the tribe of Quraysh had gone away, Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter and ʿAlī's wife, greeted her husband with a vessel filled with water. ʿAlī, who still had Dhū al-faqār with him, washed his face with the water. He then handed Fāṭīma the sword and said to her: "Take this sword, which has proven me right today", and then composed the following lines of verse:

1.ʾafāṭimu hāki al-sayfa ghayra dhamīmi falastu biriʿdīdi walā bilaʿīmi

O Fāṭima, take my sword that cannot be blamed, for I am neither cowardly or spiteful

2.laʿamrī laqad ʾaʿdhartu fī naṣri ʾAḥmadin waṭāʿati rabbi al-ʿibādi ʿalīmi

By my life, I have been absolved for my victory for Aḥmad, and my obedience to the all-knowing Lord of His servants

3.ʾamīṭi dimāʾ al-qawmi ʿanhu faʾinnahu saqā ʾāla ʿabdi al-dāri kaʾsa ḥamīmi [30]

Wipe off the blood from the people, for he has given the Umayyad's to drink of the hot drink of hell

The Messenger of God then said to her: "Take it, Fāṭima. Your husband performed his duty, for Allah killed the notables of Quraysh with his sword".

The above-mentioned traditions seem to indicate quite clearly that the sword was the possession of ʿAlī.[31]

[29] Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kanjī, *Kifāyat al-ṭālib fī manāqib ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, ed. by Muḥammad Hādī al-Amīnī, al-Maṭbaʿa al-ḥaydariyya, al-Najaf, 1970, pp. 277-280. See also: Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Fayrūzabādī, *Faḍāʾil al-khamsa min al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*, Maṭbaʿat al-Najaf, al-Najaf, 1384/1964, 2:318.

[30] See, for example: Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān, known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, Dār al-mufīd, 2nd printing, Beirut, 1993, pp. 89-90; see also: al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā*, al-Maktaba al-ḥaydariyya, 3rd printing, al-Najaf, 1970, p. 193; Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍat al-kāfī*, Dār al-aḍwāʾ, Beirut, 1990, p. 95; Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, *Āmālī al-Ṣadūq*, p. 167; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42:65-67.

However, another tradition casts some doubt on the veracity of this view. According to this tradition, ʿAlī's sword was broken during the fight against the tribe of Quraysh at Uḥud (625 CE), whereupon the Prophet gave him Dhū al-faqār, with which he then proceeded to defeat the enemy.[32]

In yet another tradition, transmitted by al-Ṭabrisī (d. 1165 CE) in the course of a description of the "raid of the parties", also known as the Battle of the Trench (627 CE), it is related that "the Prophet placed his cloud turban on his head and gave him the sword of Dhū al-faqār to fight against an idolatrous and most valiant knight by the name of ʿAmr b. Wudd (d. 627 CE).

From this account it would thus appear that the sword did not belong to ʿAlī but to the Prophet, who occasionally gave it to ʿAlī in times of battle, when a strong enemy had to be overcome.

The Sunnī view on Dhū al-faqār

The sword appears in the compilations of Sunnī traditions, just as it does in their Shīʿite counterparts. However, among the Sunnīs it is always the Prophet's sword, which he gave to ʿAlī from time to time in order to do battle against the enemies of Islam. ʿAlī himself, according to these sources, possessed another sword, known as "ʿAlī's sword", while Dhū al-faqār was a sword which the Prophet took as booty in the Battle of Badr (624 CE),[33] as noted by a number of Sunnī writers.[34]

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[31] Al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, pp. 89-90. It is also mentioned in al-Ṭabrisī, *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā*, p. 193.

[32] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3:149.

[33] ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb fī al-muḍāf wal-mansūb*, ed. and with a commentary by Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ, Dār al-bashāʾir, 1st printing, Damascus, 1994, p. 885.

[34] See, for example: Ibn Māja, *Ṣaḥīḥ sunan Ibn Māja*, by Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Albānī, Maktab al-tarbiya al-ʿarabī li-duwal al-khalīj, 3rd printing, Riyadh, 1988, 2:131; see also: Muḥammad b. Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭāʾ, Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1st printing, Beirut, 1990, 1:376.

Al-Ḥalabī in his biography of the Prophet relates that the latter possessed nine swords, one of which was named Dhū al-faqār, for the vertebra-shaped decoration in the middle, and that he took it as booty in the Battle of Badr from al-ʿĀṣ b. Wāʾil, who died in battle on that day as an infidel. The sword's pommel, grip decorations, muzzle ring and catch were of silver. The prophet had it with him in every one of his wars. It is said that it was made from a piece of iron that was found in the ground near the Kaʿba.[35]

In this report al-Ḥalabī provides an explanation for the sword's name, to wit, the vertebra-like decoration on its back. In this context Ibn Manẓur states that "the name of the Prophet's sword was Dhū al-faqār, because of its vertebra-like incisions. Ibn ʿAbbās said: 'The Prophet's sword was named Dhū al-faqār because it had small, beautiful notches, also called *fuqra*".[36] Al-Ṭarṭūsī adds: "the word *mufaqqar* refers to something that has incisions along its back".[37] Ibn al-Athīr also notes that "it was called Dhū al-faqār because of the notches in it".[38]All these traditions show that the sword had notches along its back.

To sum up the Sunnī views on Dhū al-faqār: They all agree that the sword belonged to the Prophet, who took it as booty after the Battle of Badr, although there are various views on the identity of its former owner. According to al-Ḥalabī it belonged to al-ʿĀṣ b. Wāʾil al-Sahmī, who was killed at Badr, although according to his biography as it is related in ancient sources he died before Muḥammad's emigration to al-Madīna, so that he could not have died at Badr.[39]

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[35] ʿAlī b. Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *Insān al-ʿuyūn fī sīrat al-amīn wal-maʾmūn*, known as *al-Sīra al-ḥalabiyya*, al-Maṭbaʿa al-ḥalabiyya, 1st printing, Cairo, 1964, 3:427.

[36] Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, Dār Ṣādir, 3rd printing, Beirut, 1994, 5:63, s.v. "f.q.r.". See also: ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl b. Sīda, *al-Mukhaṣaṣ*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabī and Muʾassasat al-tārīkh al-ʿarabī, 1st printing, Beirut, 1996, 2:18.

[37] Al-Ṭarṭūsī, *Tabṣirat arbāb al-albāb*, p. 49.

[38] Muṣʿab b. ʿAbdullāh al-Zubayrī, *Nisab Quraysh*, ed. by Levy Provencal, Dār al-maʿārif, Cairo, 1953, p. 408.

[39] Muḥammad b. al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1979, 2:316.

It is probable that al-Ḥalabī is wrong. The sword in all likelihood belonged to one of three pre-Islamic figures from the same clan of the tribe of Quraysh, namely the descendants of Sahm b. Haṣīṣ. According to some traditions the original owner was Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj.[40]

Ibn Saʿd, too, states that it was the property of Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Sahmī.[41] However, a few traditions claim that it was his brother, Nabīh b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Sahmī, who was the owner. The most probable view, in my opinion, is that it belonged to al-ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Sahmī, who died as an infidel in the Battle of Badr, whereupon the Prophet took the sword as booty.[42]

Al-ʿĀṣ was one of the Qurayshī youths who converted to Islam but kept their conversion a secret.[43] Therefore the idolaters took them with them in the Battle of Badr and some of them were killed, prompting the revelation of the verse "Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves…".[44]

The reason why this happened was that although they converted to Islam when the Prophet was still in Mecca, when he emigrated to al-Madīna their families kept them

[40] See, for example: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 2:316. See also: Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, ed. by Marsden Jones, Oxford University Press, 1966, 1:103; Ḥamād b. Isḥāq, *Tȝrkat al-nabī*, ed. by Akram ḍiyāʾ al-ʿumarī, 1st printing, 1984, p. 102; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wal-mulūk*, Muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, Beirut, no date, 2:424.

[41] Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 1:376-377.

[42] This is also the opinion of Schwarzlose; see: Friedrich Wilhelm Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der alten Araber*, Leipzig, 1886, p. 152. See also: Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā bi-aḥwāl al-muṣṭafā*, 2:667.

[43] These youths were: Qays b. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, Abū Qays b. al-Fākih b. al-Mughīra, al-Walīd b. ʿUtba b. Rabīʿa, ʿAmr b. Umayya b. Sufyān and ʿAlī b. Umayya b. Khalf. They were joined by Ibn Abū Ḥātim, al-Ḥārith b. Zamʿa Ibn al-Aswad and al-ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj, the latter being the subject of the tradition in question.

[44] Q 4:97. For more on the revelation of this verse see the following: Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-imāmayn al-jalīlayn* (known as *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*), edited and with an introduction by Marwān Sawār, Dār al-maʿrifa, 1st printing, Beirut 1983, margin of pp. 283-285; Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-nuqūl fī asbāb al-nuzūl*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-ʿulūm, 3rd printing, Beirut, 1980, pp. 78-79; al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. and with a commentary by a committee of scholars and experts, Muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, 1st printing, Beirut, 1995, 3:169.

imprisoned in Mecca and enticed them to remain. They submitted to their families' entreaties and then went with their people to Badr, where they were all killed.[45]

Ibn Hishām in his *Sīra* relates that the only member of the Banū Sahm clan that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib killed was al-ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih, whose outfit and weapon were thus his by right, assuming that the latter's sword did in fact belong to him and not to Munabbih, Nabīh or another polytheist from Quraysh, but this is an issue on which we are unable to decide.

Al-ʿAjlūnī states that Dhū al-faqār was the name of the Prophet's sword, which belonged to Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj or, according to another opinion, to al-ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih, or, according to yet another opinion, al-Ḥajjāj b. ʿAlāẓ gave it to the Messenger of God.[46] However, we remain convinced that it belonged to al-ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih, as perhaps most convincingly demonstrated in the following statement by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥabīb: "The Messenger of God's sword Dhū al-faqār belonged to al-ʿĀṣ b. Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj b. ʿĀmir al-Sahmī, who was killed by ʿAlī in the Battle of Badr. ʿAlī brought the sword to the Messenger of God as spoils of war, whereupon it is said:

la fatā illā ʿAlī wa-lā sayf illā dhū al-faqār[47]

There is no sword like Dhū al-faqār And no youth like ʿAlī.

The truth of the matter concerning the sword's original owner is indeed of secondary importance, in comparison to the sword itself, which no doubt was in the possession of the Prophet, who gave it to ʿAlī to use in some battles, in which he proved himself a strong warrior, especially when wielding Dhū al-faqār.

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[45] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. by Muḥammad Shaḥāta Ibrāhīm, Dār al-manār lil-ṭabʿ wal-nashr, Cairo, no date, 1: 355.

[46] Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad al-ʿAjlūnī, *Kashf al-Khafāʾ wa-muzīl al-albās*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabī, 2nd printing, Beirut, 1351 /1932, 2: 363.

[47] Muḥammad b. al-Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, Maṭbaʿat majlis dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmāniyya, 1st printing, India, 1964, p. 518.

After the Prophet's death the sword was passed on to ʿAlī and then to his descendants the imams, until it came into the hands of the Abbasid caliphs.

Al-Iṣmaʿī (d. 831 CE) relates: "I came into the presence of al-Rashīd (ruled 786-809 CE), and he said: 'Should I show you the Messenger of God's sword Dhū al-faqār'. We said: 'Yes'. So he brought it. Indeed, I have never seen a more beautiful sword. When it was posed erect nothing could be seen on it, and when it placed horizonally seven notches could be seen". Al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 831 CE) adds: "One day al-Rashīd brought out Dhū al-faqār and I asked him for permission to kiss it. He agree and I kissed it".[48]

If this tradition can be trusted, the sword was passed down from one Abbasid caliph to another. There are reports that it was in the possession of the Abbasid caliph al-Muʿtazz (ruled 866-869). The Abbasid poet al-Buḥturī (d. 807 CE) mentions the sword in a panegyric to al-Muʿtazz. Later he mentions it in another panegyric, this time to al-Muʿtazz's successor, the caliph al-Muhtadī bi-Allāh:

1.matā yataʿammam bilsaḥabi tulath ʿalā kafiyyin lahā yaḥtāzu ʾirtha ʾiswidādihā.

When he covers his head with *al-saḥāb* turban , as if using its muzzle as a turban

2.waʾinn yataqallada dhā al-fiqāri yuḍaf ʾilā shujāʿi qurayshin fī al-waghā wajawādihā.[49]

And when he girds Dhū al-faqār he is like the bravest of Quraysh in strength and gallantry.

In another poem in praise of al-Muʿtazz he says:

1.Wa-qad taraka al-ʿabbasu ʿindaka wa-bnuhu

ʿulā ṭulna marmā al-najmi ḥattā taḥayyarā

[48] Al-ʿAjlūnī, *Kashf al-khafāʾ*, 2:364.
[49] Al-Walīd b. ʿUbayd al-Buḥturī, *Dīwān al-Buḥturī*, with a commentary and an introduction by Ḥannā al-Fākhūrī, Dār al-jīl, 1st printing, Beirut, 1995, 3:182.

Al-ʿAbbās and his son left you such glory that the stars were put to shame

2.humā warrathāka dhā al-faqāri wa-ṣayyarā

ilayka al-qaḍība wa-al-ridāʾa al-muḥabbarā[50]

The two of them bequeathed Dhū al-faqār to you as they bequeathed the Prophet's rod and his cloak

We thus see that this sword was a source of pride and a symbol of domination over Arabs and Persians alike, both because it had belonged to the Prophet and because it was an impressive artifact decorated with silver.

According to a number of reports Dhū al-faqār passed from the Abbasid rulers into the hands of the Fatimid caliphs, in other words, from the Muslim orient to the Muslim west. The Fatimid rulers, if al-Maqrīzī's account is to be believed, kept valuable arms in their castles, including Dhū al-faqār. Al-Maqrīzī adds: "The stores of swords and other instruments and weapons were taken and divided among the ten who had rebelled against the Fatimid al-Mustanṣir (d. 1094 CE), and Dhū al-faqār came into the possession of Tāj al-Mulūk Būrī b. Ayyūb (d. 1183 CE).[51] However, we cannot be certain that the sword named Dhū al-faqār that was kept in the Fatimid arsenals was the same as the one which the Prophet took as booty at Badr, especially in light of the fact that it frequently happens in the history of many nations that famous artifacts gave their names to other, similar ones, especially in periods when there were no means to validate or disprove claims of this kind.

After the Ottomans conquered Egypt following the battle of Marj Dābiq in 1517 they entered Cairo and took its treasures, including Dhū al-faqār, to Istanbul, the capital of

[50]Ibid., 1:459-460

[51] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ed. by Muḥammad Zīnhum and Mudya al-Sharqāwī, Maktabat Madbūlī, 1st printing, Cairo, 1998, 3:182.

the Ottoman. It was placed in the holy relics section of Topkapı Palace, where it is still on display to tis day.[52]

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we showed that Dhū al-faqār was the Prophet's sword, which he took as part of the spoils of the Battle of Badr and occasionally gave it to ʿAlī, when the latter went out to do battle. The sword was famous for its craftsmanship and became the subject of proverbs, such as "There is no sword like Dhū al-faqār"; its name is due to the fact that it had notches on its pommel.

It became a most famous sword, and the saying "There is no sword like Dhū al-faqār" was used throughout the Muslim world, especially among Shīʿites; it was inscribed on the walls of mosques and holy shrines, and on swords in the Middle Ages.

Dhū al-faqār was no doubt double-edged, as were all ancient Arab swords. When later single-edged swords came to predominate, people imagined that Dhū al-faqār was a sword with two straps. The Shīʿites played an important role in correcting this impression and clarifying the sword's identity and features.

Shīʿite writers describe Dhū al-faqār in fantastic terms. This is understandable, since glorifying a sword associated with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib of necessity implies the glorification of the personality of ʿAlī, too. For them the sword's worth lies purely in that of its owner, and the fact that it is considered superior to all other swords leads to considering ʿAlī to be superior to the rest of mankind.

We conclude by pointing out that Shīʿites today give their children the name Dhū al-faqār, as a blessed name that invokes the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the father of the imams.

[52] According to another opinion the two parts of the sword can be found today in the Russian imperial museum; for details see: Scharzlose, *Die Waffen*, p. 152.

SYMBOL AND ARCHETYPES

CHAPTER FOUR

Jinn and Shīᶜite Imams

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According to the Shīᶜite creed,[1] its imams possess the power to perform miracles, which they use in order to convince doubters. *Jinn* (demons) provide the background or play a role in some of the miracles which Shīᶜite imams perform. The present study will describe these miracles, as reflected in the ancient sources of Twelver Shīᶜism.

The subject is not easy to study, since most of the materials needed for a proper analysis are dispersed within numerous Shīᶜite writings of various types and from various periods, including religious, cultural and historical journals, and others.

Jinn have and still do occupy a place of considerable importance in Islamic and Arab heritage. The ancients speak about them, much was added in the Middle Ages, and still today they and their strange unseen world are a subject of discussion.

Just as *jinn* have played an obvious role in Arab and Islamic culture in general, they also appear in the Shīᶜite heritage. The present study thus deals with a major aspect of Shīᶜite thought, and it is hoped that it will lead to some significant conclusions concerning the Shīᶜite view on this concept.

The study is based mainly on Shīᶜite religious, doctrinal, literary and other sources written between the tenth and twelfth centuries CE. The most important of these sources are the following:

A. *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt fī faḍāʾil āl Muḥammad* by Abū Jaᶜfar b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrūkh aṣ-Ṣaffār al-Qummī[2] (d. 290/903), a contemporary of the tenth imam ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī (d. 868) and the eleventh imam al-Ḥasan al-ᶜAskarī (d. 874). The great importance of this work for the present study lies in the fact that it contains numerous Shīᶜite traditions which originated in very early times.
B. *Al-Kāfī* by Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad b. Yaᶜqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940), one of the most prominent Shīᶜite scholars and jurists at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. The book, the earliest Shīᶜite *ḥadīth* compilation, contains traditions about the Shīᶜite doctrine of the imamate which have been highly regarded by Shīᶜite scholars for more than a millennium.
C. *Al-Irshād fī maᶜrifat ḥujaj Allāh ᶜalā al-ᶜibād* by Abū ᶜAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. an-Nuᶜmān al-ᶜUkburī l-Baghdādī, known as ash-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/

1 The words "Shīᶜite" and "Shīᶜism" in this paper refer to Imāmī or Twelver Shīᶜism.
2 For details see: Mohammad Ali, Amir-Moezzi. "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (m. 290/902-3) et son *Kitāb Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*", *Journal Asiatique* 280 (1992):223-224.

1022). The book contains traditions about the history of the imams, their virtues and the virtues of their companions. It was one of the first Shīᶜite sources to have been studied in the history of Shīᶜite biographical and "virtues" literature.

D. *Dalāʾil al-imāma* by Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum aṭ-Ṭabarī (a jurist of the fourth/tenth century). The book contains traditions quoting utterances of the Prophet and the imams on the Prophet's family, its status and the miracles its members have performed. It also reports the imams' own sayings and sermons and discusses their lives and virtues. Among Shīᶜites the book is regarded very highly and its traditions have been copied by numerous books of *ḥadīth*s on the Shīᶜa.

E. *Rawḍat al-wāᶜiẓīn wa-baṣīrat al-muttaᶜiẓīn* by Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Fattāl an-Naysābūrī (d. 508/1114). This is a book about the principles of Shīᶜism and the virtues of its imams.

F. *Iᶜlām al-warā bi-aᶜlām al-hudā* by al-Faḍl b. Ḥasan aṭ-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1056), a biography of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve imams.

G. *Al-Kharāᶜij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ* by Quṭb ad-Dīn Saᶜīd b. Hibatuallāh ar-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177), the teacher of Ibn Shahrāshūb. The book is devoted entirely to the miracles of the imams.

H. *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* by Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī b. Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192). Ibn Shahrāshūb was a very well known Shīᶜite scholar already in his own lifetime and was respected even among Sunnīs. The book contains biographies of the Shīᶜite imams and discusses the miracles attributed to them.

I. *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī asrār amīr al-muʾminīn* by Rajab b. Muḥammad al-Bursī l-Hillī (d. 813/1440). The book contains reports of the virtues and miracles of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve imams.

The following more recent books were also used:

A. *Biḥār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1115/1698). Al-Majlisī lived in Isfahan and devoted his life to collecting Shīᶜite traditions. In 1686 the Safavid ruler appointed him to the post of Shaykh al-Islām, which he used to strengthen the position to Twelver Shīᶜism. *Biḥār al-anwār* contains materials from numerous and quiet varied sources, including *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* and more, thus making it possible to compare among the various traditions which appear in the book.

B. *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz, maᶜājiz al-aʾimma l-ithnay ᶜashar wa-dalāʾil al-ḥujaj ᶜalā l-bashar* by Hāshim b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī (d. 1246/1830), which contains reports of the miracles of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve imams.

An acquaintance with the connection between *jinn* and the imams as reflected in the texts of Twelver Shīᶜism can to some extent help reveal certain important aspects in the evolution of Twelver Shīᶜite doctrine and its pivotal ideas.

Before we enter into the details of the imams' miracles and their encounters with *jinn*, we shall survey the subject of demons in Arab culture, especially in the Qurʾān and its commentaries, and also discuss the issue of the imams as miracle workers.

Demons in Arab heritage

Jinn, as the Arabs and Muslims have described them, are creatures with bodies and shapes of air or fire. They are invisible to the naked eye, but are intelligent and possess superhuman powers, can take various shapes and can perform deeds which mortals are incapable of. There are many different characterizations of *jinn*.

Muslims all believe that demons exist; they have sayings about them and tell strange stories about them. The Qurᵓān itself mentions *jinn* in more than one-hundred places. Their existence is taken for granted also in many religious and doctrinal books belonging to every Muslim sect and school, foremost among them the Sunnīs and Shīᶜites. Very few Muslim denominations have dared doubt the existence of demons, among then a minority of Muᶜtazilites, whose rejection of *jinn*, however, has found no echo among other Muslims.

Demons have played an overt role in Arab and Muslim culture in general, and the same is true of the Shīᶜite heritage as well.

The earliest writers of Arabic literature have dealt with the subject of *jinn*, on which they wrote numerous books and paragraphs within books. Perhaps the first to have made a study of demons was ᶜAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 225 AH), who devoted to the subject a special chapter in his book *al-Ḥayawān*, in which he describes the demons themselves, their features, their classes and their deeds. He was followed by numerous other Arab scholars who added more details about the characteristics and deeds of demons, among them Abū Zayd al-Qurashī (d. 170 AH) in *Jamharat ashᶜār al-ᶜarab*, ath-Thaᶜālibī (d. 429 AH) in *Thimār al-qulūb*, al-Alūsī (d. 1342 AH) in *Bulūgh al-ᵓarab*, as well as Abū l-ᶜAlāᵓ al-Maᶜarrī (d. 449AH), in whose *Risālat al-ghufrān* demons occupy a prominent place. Ash-Shiblī (d. 769 AH) devoted the greater part of his book Ākām al-murjān fī gharāᵓib al-akhbār wa-aḥkām al-Jān to what the Arabs and Muslim think about demons. Dozens of other ancient books have dealt with various aspects of demons and their world, most of them from a Sunnī and do not represent the Shīᶜī perspective. The present study will shed light on the way Twelver Shīᶜism sees the matter.

The study intends to examine the motif of *jinn* and their presence in Twelver Shīᶜite traditions which in many of the topics they deal with reflect the Shīᶜite views in general. An analysis of the various aspects and forms in which demons are presented may help us gain a greater understanding of the Shīᶜite doctrines concerning the presence of *jinn*, their functions and relations with them, as part of the way in which Islam imagines the world beyond this one to be in general.

The presence of *jinn* together with the imams is mentioned in Shīᶜite texts whose purpose is to prove the authority of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the other imams, and the truth of their beliefs and some of their central doctrines. *Jinn* are also present in Shīᶜite texts which demonstrate the falsity of the views of their opponents, the caliphs and their adherents. *Jinn* play a major role in the shaping of Shīᶜite views and express them as an external party which bears witness to the truth of Shīᶜite doctrine and the falsity of the views of their opponents, as reflected in relevant Shīᶜite traditions.

Shīᶜite views and doctrines on matters of religion and politics were often treated with contempt by the ruling establishment in the Muslim state, which recruited the pens of scholars from other sects, especially the most influential one, the Sunna, among which

there were numerous opponents of Shīᶜism. Shīᶜites also suffered oppression at the hands of Sunnīs in some centers of the Muslim world in the Middle Ages.

As a result, Shīᶜites and Shīᶜite thinkers tried to retain their own identity through the formulation of a strong integrated doctrinal framework which would enable them to oppose the grave threats which they faced. The Shīᶜites thus formulated their doctrine in a way which fit in with their religious interests and ensured its survival over time. The idea of inculcating the Shīᶜite doctrine was important for many Shīᶜite thinkers, who collected Shīᶜite traditions and wove them into the fabric of early Shīᶜite thought.

The Shīᶜites neglected no effort in studying any tradition or report which could provide support for their views and their faith in their sect, as against the dangers which faced them from the majority Sunnī sect. The demons and their hidden world had an important function in this connection. According to Shīᶜite traditions *jinn* played a positive role in defending the Shīᶜite faith and refuting the Sunnī creed. The Shīᶜites thus clearly utilized the demons in their fight against the Sunna.

The Shīᶜites were quite adept at choosing what served their interests in many situations. One of the things which they utilized well in their early works as well as in their later sources was the association of demons with their imams in various styles and forms that served their doctrinal and sectarian interests (especially the doctrine of the imamate and the philosophical and religious principles which were derived from it).

The present study will thus show how Shīᶜism has recruited and used demons and their world for the purpose of promoting its cause. As a byproduct our analysis will also enable us to gain a better understanding of the evolution of Shīᶜite religious literature and thought in centuries past.

The topic of *jinn* and their relation to the imams was chosen for two reasons. One reason is that numerous Shīᶜite traditions report encounters between demons and the imams. The other is that very few previous studies have dealt with this subject. Our examination of the published literature on Shīᶜite thought in recent years has shown that there is not one scholarly study which has focused on this topic, an impression which is confirmed by Etan Kohlberg.[3] However, some Islamic scholars have published important and useful books and articles which have some points in common with our study. These publications deal mostly with the subject of *jinn* in the Sunnī tradition. Below we provide a brief survey of the most important of these publications.

The scholar Khalīl ᶜAthāmina in his article "al-Jinn: Jīrān lā narāhum" ("Jinn: Unseen Neighbors")[4] provides valuable information about the way in which demons are perceived in Muslim historical Sunnī sources, their numerous shapes, their abodes, their food and their mounts, their sexual relations, the crimes attributed to them, their role in the dissemination of Islam at its early stages, and their contributions to early Arabic poetry. The paper reflects to a large extent the Islamic religious and literary perceptions on demons and their hidden worlds as described in works of clearly Sunnī provenance.

3 Etan Kohlberg, *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīism* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991); Kolhberg, Etan. (eds.). *Shīism*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

4 Khalīl ᶜAthāmina, "al-Jinn: Jīrān lā narāhum". *al-Karmil, Abḥāth fī l-lugha wa-l-adab* 8 (1987): 83–122).

The useful information with which ᶜAthāmina dealt in his article is quite similar to what can be found in the article on "Djinn" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*,[5] and in the entry on "Jinn" in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*,[6] both of which repeat many well-known facts about demons, their appearance and their status in Muslim religious thought. The same is true of the study by Zbinden,[7] in which folk beliefs about demons are treated at length, including the place which they occupied in Muslim society in antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Fahd,[8] too, has written an article in which he presents valuable information and comments on demons and the role they play early Muslim thought, especially among Sunnīs.

Allouche's dissertaion "Between the Pure Milk and the Froth": Images of the Devil in the Muslim Tradition"[9] belongs to the best scholarly works on the subject. Her study deals with *jinn* in light of the Prophet's traditions among Sunnī Muslims, and in the present paper we found it very useful when comparing the role of demons among Sunnīs with the Shīᶜite heritage.

The present study may thus be said to complement the aforementioned works by providing the Shīᶜite side of this issue, which has so far been dealt with only from the Sunnī perspective.

A number of scholars who specialize in Shīᶜism and Shīᶜite literature have pointed out that demons have and still do play a part in Shīᶜite culture, and have made some important observations on the matter. Thus, for example, Amir-Moezzi in the second part of his *The Divine Guide in Early Shīᶜism*[10] briefly alludes to the creation of the Shīᶜite imams in a world which existed before the creation of mankind (a world which in Muslim sources is called "the world of spirits" (*ᶜālam al-arwāḥ*) or "the world of prepetuity" (*ᶜālam adh-dharr*), and mentions the connection between those ancient Shiᶜite ideas and the ancient world of demons.

In a previous study on the killing of al-Ḥusayn b. ᶜAlī in Shīᶜite thought[11] the present author tried to shed some light on the role with demons are said to have played in that event. There we discuss numerous Shīᶜite traditions which demonstrate the importance of demons for Shīᶜites in their martyrological literature. In a sense this paper thus complements the work which the afore-mentioned scholars have done for Sunnīsm by providing a comprehensive description of demons and their role in Twelver Shīᶜite literature and doctrine.

5 D. B. Macdonald, "Djinn", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*², 2: 546–548.

6 Chabbi, Jacqueline. "Jinn". *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* III (2003), 43–50.

7 Zbinden, Ernest. Die Djinn des Islam und der Altoientalische Geisterglaube. (Stuttgart: Verlag Paul, 1953).

8 Fahd, T. "Anges, Démons et Djinns en Islam". *Sources Orientales* 8 (1971), 155–213.

9 Zohar Shani Allouche, *Between the Pure Milk and the Froth: Images of the Devil in the Muslim Tradition (Hadīth)*. Ph.D. Dissertation.(London: SOAS: 2006–2007).

10 Mohammad Ali Moezzi-Amir, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*. Translate: David Streight. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

11 Khalid Sindawi, *The maqātil in Shīᶜite Literature*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2000) [Hebrew].

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Loebnstein in one of her studies, on the miracles ascribed to the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE),[12] also mentions in passing this imam's relations with demons.

These, then, are the studies which have a certain connection with the present paper, and clearly show that the subject it deals with has yet to have been treated and analyzed properly in previous publications.

The purpose of the study

An acquaintance with the relationship between demons and the imams as reflected in Twelver Shīʿite texts can help uncover some important aspects of the evolution of Twelver Shīʿite doctrine and of some of its main ideas.

The present study will aim to answer the following questions:

1. What is the connection between the Shīʿite imams and the *jinn*? When, where and how did this connection arise?
2. How do Shīʿites view demons and their hidden world? How significant are demons in Shīʿite thought? What do Shīʿites think about them?
3. What is the purpose for the mention of demons in the writings of Twelver Shīʿism? Do the Shīʿite traditions which mention the *jinn* possess any specific characteristics?
4. What is the connection between the appearance of demons to the imams, according to Shīʿite traditions, and the Shīʿite doctrines and articles of faith? What role do demons play in validating the Shīʿite creed?
5. What are the Shīʿite issues and problems in connection with which demons are mentioned as appearing before the imams? Do these issues and problems have any specific connection with Shīʿite doctrine?
6. Can one classify the demons mentioned in Twelver Shīʿite literature into different types and classes? Or are they all of one type?
7. What are the demons' features as reflected in Shīʿite traditions?
8. To what extent was Shīʿism influenced in its views on demons by ancient folk beliefs about demons and their world among other peoples and religions?
9. How frequent are texts and traditions about demons in Shīʿite sources? In what contexts do such texts appear?

These and other questions will be addressed in what follows.

The research method

The study is based on the collection and analysis of Shīʿite traditions and texts in Twelver Shīʿite published sources, in which the imams encounter demons. The traditions were classified according to the subject of the encounter and the identity of the imam in question, arranged chronologically. In many cases more than one tradition deals with the same topic without adding anything of significance; in such cases the additional traditions are either mentioned in the footnotes or have been ignored entirely.

12 See Judith Loebnstein, "Miracle in Šiʿī Thought: A case-Study of the Miracles attributed to Imām Ǧaʿfar Al-Ṣādiq", *Arabica*. Tome L Fascicule 2, Avril(2003), 199–244.

In order to cover all the issues pertaining to the topic of the study, it was necessary to examine every available published book and article which was of direct or indirect relevance to the questions which the study addresses.

The traditions were analyzed textually and with regard to their doctrinal and conceptual content, and compared at times with other materials in the same and contemporary sources, and at other times with materials from other religious groups and other time periods.

The imams are acquainted with the various types of jinn

According to Shīᶜite sources *jinn* are invisible creatures, which can take on the shape of humans, snakes, scorpions, camels, cows, sheep, horses, mules, donkeys and birds.[13]

A Shīᶜite imam knows the various shapes which a demon can assume. In fact, he has knowledge of all things. Nothing is ever hidden from him; he can see everything, whether hidden or standing in front of him.[14]

As an example of the fact that an imam can see demons in whatever shape they appear, consider the following tradition, reported in the name of Abū Ḥamza th-Thumālī:[15] "I was with the imam Abū ᶜAbdallāh (the fifth imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir) between Mecca and Medina. He looked to his left and saw a black dog. The imam then asked Abū

13 *Jinn* are most frequently said to have the form of snakes and dogs. While *jinn* can appear in numerous different forms, they rarely take the actual form in which God created them. Iblīs, the father of all demons, is said to have been so beautiful that he was called "the peacock of angels", but after he refused to obey God's command to bow to Adam God changed his nature, his name and first of all his features, which became very ugly.
For more details see: ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Muttaqī l-Hindī, *Kanz al-ᶜumāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa-l-afᶜāl*, ed. by Ṣafwa as-Saqqā and Bakrī Ḥayānī (Beirut: Muᵓassasat ar-Risāla, 1979), 6:143; cf. also: Badr ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. ᶜAbdallāh ash-Shiblī, *Akām al-murjān fī aḥkām al-jān* (Cairo: Maktabat wa-Maṭbaᶜat Muḥammad ᶜAlī Ṣabīḥ wa-Awlāduhu, 1362/1943), 17; Ismāᶜīl Abū l-Fidāᵓ b. Kathīr al-Qurashī, Tafsīr *al-qurᵓān al-ᶜaẓīm* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāᵓ at-Turāth al-ᶜArabī, 1969), 3:528; Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, *Kitāb az-Zīyna fī l-kalimāt al-islāmiyya l-ᶜarabiyya*, ed. by Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī (Cairo: Maṭābiᶜ Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī, 1957), 1:172. Demons most commonly take on the shape of a black dog. On the appearance of demons as snakes, see: ash-Shiblī, *Ākām al-murjān*, 19; Majdī Muḥammad ash-Shahāwī, *Ashᶜār al-jinn* (al-Manṣūra: Maktabat al-Īmān, 1995), 12ff.

14 For more on this subject see: Etan Kohlberg, "Vision and the Imams", in: Eric Chaumont, Denise Aigle, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Pierre Lory (eds.), *Vision d'Islam: Melanges islamologiques offerts a Daniel Gimaret*, (Lovain, Paris, 2001), 125–157.

15 His full name is Abū Ḥamza ath-Thumālī Thābit b. Dīnār, with cognomens Abū Dīnār and Abū Ṣafiyya, a resident of Kūfa of Arabian extraction, from the tribe of Azd. He met the imams ᶜAlī Zayn al-ᶜĀbidīn (d. 713 CE), Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732 CE), Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE) and Mūsā l-Kāẓim (d. 799 CE), and related their utterances. He is considered a reliable transmitter. The imam al-Ṣādiq said of him: "Abū Ḥamza ath-Thumālī is like Salmān al-Fārisī in his days". The imam ᶜAlī ar-Riḍā (d. 818 CE) said of him: "Abū Ḥamza was like Luqmān in his days", because he served four imams. There is some disagreement concerning the year of his death. According to one opinion he died in 150/767 while according to another he was still alive during the time of the imam Mūsa l-Kāẓim. For more details about him see: Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī l-Irbilī, *Jāmiᶜ ar-ruwāt wa-izāḥat al-ishtibāhāt ᶜalā ṭuruq al-isnād* (Beirut: Dār al-Adwāᵓ, 1403/1982), 1:134–135; Taqī ad-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī b. Dāwūd al-Ḥillī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1963), 396, *ḥadīth* 26; Aḥmad b. ᶜAbdallāh al-Barqī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1963) 8, 9, 47; Muḥammad b. ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī* (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1929), 201–203, nos. 353–357.

Ḥamza: 'Why are you hurrying so?'. The dog then turned into a bird. When Abū Ḥamza asked the imam what this was, he answered that it was a demon named ʿUtham[16] a messenger of the demons who came to inform him that the caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (ruled 724–743) had died moments ago, and to spread the news of his death in every land".[17]

We see in this tradition that the imam is seen to be able to recognize a demon of whatever shape and to know their names and professions. The fact that the demon came to announce the death of the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik, who was known for his hostility towards Shīʿism, shows that the demon was aware of the kind of news which would gladden the imam's heart. The demon thus seems subservient to the imam, who also understands the language of demons (and all languages spoken by humans and animals)[18].

The imam ʿAlī battles infidel demons

In more than one tradition ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 CE) is reported to have been given by the Prophet the task of battling infidel *jinn*. According to one of these, when the Prophet went out to raid the Banū l-Muṣṭaliq (627 CE) he camped near a rocky river bed. Towards the end of the night the angel Gabriel descended to him and informed him that a group of infidel demons were lurking in the river bed in order to dupe him and do evil to his companions. The Prophet thereupon called ʿAlī and asked him to go into the river bed. He informed him of the presence there of demons who were enemies of God and asked him to drive them away with the power given to him by God.[19] He also told him to protect himself from them by means of God's names. ʿAlī then took one-hundred men with him and

16 In some traditions the name of the demon is ʿUtam., see: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrūkh aṣ-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt fī faḍāʾil āl Muḥammad* (Qumm: Maktabat Āyatallāh al-Marʿashī, 1983), 96, *ḥadīth* no. 4; in another tradition he is named ʿUthaym, see: Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1968), 6: 553, no. 8.

17 Abū Jaʿfar b. Jarīr b. Rustum aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma* (an-Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa l-Ḥaydariyya, 1963), quoted by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (4th ed., Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1984), 60: 84, *ḥadīth* 41; Saʿīd b. Hibatallāh ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ* (1st ed., Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1989), 2:855, *ḥadīth* 71; Ḥasan an-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil wa-mustanbaṭ al-masāʾil* (1st ed., Qumm: Muʾassasat āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ at-Turāth, 1988), 8:294, no. 9483–1; ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā l-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma* (Tabrīz: Maktabat banī hāshimī, 1961), 2:192, quoted in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 27:18, *ḥadīth* 7, 47:146–147, *ḥadīth* 201, 62:68, *ḥadīth* 28; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 5:326.

18 The imams' knowledge of all languages, whether of man or beast, is one of the characteristics which distinguish them from ordinary mortals; see, for example: Judith Loebnstein, "Miracles in Siʿi Thought: A Case-Study of the Miracles attributed to Imam Ga'far As-Sadiq", *Arabica*, Tome L Fascicule 2, Avril (2003),p. 218.

19 Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. an-Nuʿmān al-ʿUkbarī ash-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād fī maʿrifat ḥujaj Allāh ʿalā l-ʿibād*, ed. by Muʾassasat li-Āl al-Bayt ʿalayhim as-Salām li-Iḥyāʾ at-Turāth (Qumm: The International ash-Shaykh al-Mufīd Millennial Conference, 1992), 179–180; al-Faḍl b. Ḥasan aṭ-Ṭabarsī, *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā* (3rd ed., Qumm: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1970), 182, both quoted in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 63:86, *ḥadīth* 42, 39:175, *ḥadīth* 18, from al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād* and ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, 1:3, *ḥadīth* 47; Rashīd ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib ʿalayhim as-salām* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-ʿAllāma li-n-Nashr, 1960), 2:87; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 18:84, *ḥadīth* 3; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 2:65–66.

when he approached the edge of the river bed he asked his companion to remain there while he neared the river bed. A strong wind began to blow, and nearly pushed ᶜAlī and those with him to the ground. ᶜAlī then shouted and addressed the infidel demons: "I am the agent of the messenger of God and his cousin. Show yourselves if you wish". The infidel demons then appeared in the shape of black men (*az-zuṭṭ*)[20] with torches in their hands. ᶜAlī went over to them, reciting the Qurᵓān and gesturing with his sword to the right and the left, and within seconds the figures became as black smoke. ᶜAlī then said *allāhu akbar* and annihilated them all. Afterwards he ascended whence he had descended, returned to his men and informed them of what had happened.

ᶜAlī battles the demons at the Dhāt al-ᶜAlam well

ᶜAbdallāh b. ᶜAbbās (d. 687/68 CE) relates that at al-Ḥudaybiyya (6/627) the people were stricken with a great thirst, whereupon the Prophet asked his Companions to go to the Dhāt al-ᶜAlam well and bring water. A group of them went, among them Salama b. al-Akwaᶜ.[21] When they approached the well they heard a voice, much movement and the sound of drums, and saw a flame burning with no wood. They retreated in fear. The Prophet then asked his Companions to go and bring the water. A man from the Banū Sulaym went, declaiming the following verse:

> Is it from the humming that comes from the direction of the [trees of] salam
> the man who was sent by the best of creatures shrinks back
> before he reaches the wells at ᶜAlam
> and draws water while the darkness of night still prevails
> for by so doing he would avoid disgrace and rapprochement.

As this man proceeded to advance he heard a voice and retreated in fear. The people became ever more thirsty and did not eat. Then he said to ᶜAlī: Go with those water drawers until you reach the Dhāt al-ᶜAlam well, draw water and return God willing. ᶜAlī then went out declaiming:

> I seek the protection of God against deviation caused by the
> humming of the geniis who wanted to frighten me
> and started their fire to cause misfortune,
> and added to that the striking on the drums[22]

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20 *Az-Zuṭṭ* are a black people from Sind, as well as a race from Sudan; sg. *zaṭṭī*.

21 His full name: Salama b. ᶜAmr b. Sinān al-Akwaᶜ al-Aslamī, one of the Prophet's Companions who swore allegiance to him under the tree. He went on seven raids with the Prophet, including the attacks on al-Ḥudaybiyya, Khaybar and Ḥunayn. He was a fierce and brave fighter. In the year 5/626 the Prophet gave him Hind, the daughter of Umm Qirfa l-Fazāriyya, who had been captured by Zayd b. Ḥāritha, who would later become one of the conquerors of North Africa in the days of ᶜUthmān. He is the transmitter of seventy-seven *ḥadīths*. He died in Medina. For more details see: Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl ash-shaykh aṭ-Ṭūsī* (1st ed., Tehran: Muᵓassasat an-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1995), 40, *ḥadīth* 251–9, 6 no. 598–3; Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, ed. by Ilse Lichtenstadter (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, no date), 119, 289.

22 Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 41:70–71.

After ᶜAlī left with a group of men he said to them: Do not fear. When they approached a tree near the well of Dhāt al-ᶜAlam they saw flames burning without wood, heard high voices and disembodied heads making a noise. They passed the tree and reached the well, and al-Barāʾ b. ᶜĀzib (d. 691 CE) dropped his bucket into the well and drew one or two bucketfuls of water. Then the bucket snapped and dropped into the well, which was dark, narrow and deep. From the well came sounds of loud laughter, whereupon ᶜAlī tied himself to a piece of cloth and descended into the well. The laughter inside the well became stronger. When ᶜAlī reached the bottom a loud sound and a commotion were heard. Then ᶜAlī called out allāh akbar, allāh akbar, I am the servant of allāh, the brother of the Messenger of allāh. He then annihilated the demons, called his companions and ordered the water skins to be filled. Then a demon's voice was heard saying:

> What a brave and courageous man who travels through nights
> and reaches first to his targets
> What generous prominent lords from (the tribe of) Hashim whose men are known for their prominence and stature
> They resemble the Messenger of Allāh who brought us the miraculous verses (of the Koran)
> or like Ali who drives away calamities
> so should be man in time of need
> Whereupon ᶜAlī recited the following lines of verse:[23]
> Night is fearful that frightens even the brave man
> and frightens the brave and wise one
> Yet I am a wolf that is frightening more than it
> and do not fear war and calamities
> Once I shake my sharp sword
> You will see the wonders !

After ᶜAli's victory over the *jinn* he returned to the Prophet and reported to him in detail concerning what had occurred. The Prophet then sais that the voice which had declaimed the verses was Salqana or Samlaqa b. ᶜAmdāf,[24] who had killed the idol devil named Musᶜar, which used to speak to the Quraysh tribe through the idols and mock the Prophet.[25]

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23 For more information on these lines of verse see: ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Dīwān al-Imām ᶜAlī*, ed. by ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Karm (no place of publication, no date), 24–25; ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Dīwān al-Imām ᶜAlī*, ed. by Muḥammad ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim Khafāji (Beirut: Dār Ibn Zaydūn, no date), 43; ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Dīwān Amīr al-muʾminīn al-imām ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, ed. by Mājida Ḥammūd (Damascus: Dār wa-Muʾassasat Raslān, 2007), 71; ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Dīwān al-Imām ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, ed. by Muḥammad ᶜAbd ar-Raḥmān ᶜAwaḍ (Imbāba, Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-ᶜIlmiyya li-n-Nashr, 1977), 28.

24 See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Samlaᶜa b. ᶜAzzāf, 41:71–72; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 2:90, Samlaqa b. Gharāf; idem, 2:88–89, whence al-Majlisī, *op.cit.*, 41:70–72; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 2:82–85.

25 Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 2:88–89, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 41:70–72; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 2:82–85.

The demons' fear of ᶜAlī

ᶜAlī does battle against the demons and smites a number of them (before his creation)

In this context it is related that a *jinnī* was sitting next to the Prophet. When ᶜAlī entered the *jinnī* disappeared, and when ᶜAlī left it came back and sat down again where it had sat before. The Prophet asked it: "Why did you disappear when ᶜAlī came in?". It replied: "O Messenger of God, ᶜAlī wounded me". The Prophet asked him: "How could that be, when you only appeared in the time of the prophet Solomon?". The *jinnī* replied: "God, may He be glorified, created an angel in the shape of ᶜAlī who fought the prophets".[26]

In another tradition it is related that a *jinnī* came to the Prophet and asked him about some difficult issues when ᶜAlī entered and the *jinnī* began to shrink until it looked like a bird. Then the *jinnī* explained to the Prophet that it had come to Noah's ark to sink it on the day of the flood, but when he reached the ark ᶜAlī struck it on its hand and cut it off. The *jinnī* then took out its amputated hand and showed it to the Prophet.[27]

In yet another tradition it is related that a *jinnī* was in the Prophet's presence, and when ᶜAlī entered the *jinnī* begged the Prophet to save it from ᶜAlī. It said: "Protect me from this youth who enters". When the Prophet asked him "What did ᶜAlī do to you?" the *jinnī* answered: "I rebelled against the prophet Solomon and he sent a band of demons against me, which I killed. After that ᶜAlī came to me, imprisoned me and wounded me. Here is the wound, which even now has not healed".[28]

The purpose of all three of the preceding traditions would seem to be to demonstrate the antiquity of Shīᶜism, which already supposedly existed in the days of the prophets, and even before Creation. These traditions also glorify ᶜAlī, who fought the *jinn* in the far past, before his own creation, as well as in the times of the prophets Solomon and Noah. ᶜAlī is thus represented as a fighter against demons, who punishes them for their transgressions. The *jinn* have therefore feared ᶜAlī for millennia before his birth, when he was still in the shadow world.

The basic aim of these traditions is to emphasize ᶜAlī's right to the imamate and to convince people to obey this man, who has been a powerful figure for thousands of years, who has protected the prophets and is feared by the *jinn*, who fear his strength, apparently given to him by God himself, and ask the Prophet Muḥammad for protection against him.

The imam ᶜAlī is sent by the Prophet to the jinn in order to convert them to Islam

Salmān al-Fārisī[29] (d. 655 CE) is said to have related as follows: "We were with the Prophet at al-Abṭaḥ[30] on a rainy day. He was surrounded by a group of his Companions when we

26 Al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 1:143, no. 83.

27 Rajab b. Muḥammad al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī ḥaqā'iq asrār amīr al-mu'minīn*, ed. by ᶜAlī ᶜĀshūr (2nd ed., Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Aᶜlamī li-l-Maṭbūᶜāt, 2006), 132.

28 *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

29 For more details about him, see: G. Levi Della Vida. "Salmān al-Fārisī", *EI²* (2004), Supplement, Vol. XII, pp. 701–702.

30 Al-Abṭaḥ means the soft earths and soft pebbles. As a place name it appears together with Mecca and al-Minā, because its distance between them is the same, although al-Minā may perhaps be closer. See:

saw a storm rising. It raised the dust until it neared the Prophet. Then a man appeared out of it and said: 'Peace be on you, o Messenger of God'. The Prophet returned his greeting and asked him: 'Who are you?'. He replied: 'I am ʿIṭrifa b. Shimrākh of the Banū Najāḥ'. The Prophet then asked him to appear in his true form. He appeared in the form of stocky, long-haired old man whose face was covered with thick hair, his eyes open lengthwise, a mouth in his chest with long fangs, nails like a hyena's claws and teeth like a hyena's. The *jinnī* then said to the Prophet: I and my people believed in you when God sent you, but many demons clashed with us because of our conversion to Islam. They are more powerful and greater in number than us, and have taken control of the water and the pastures, and brought harm to us and our beasts.

The demon ʿIṭrifa therefore asked the Prophet to send someone with him who would convert the *jinn* to Islam; he swore he would bring him back safe and sound. Whereupon the Prophet asked Abū Bakr to accompany the ʿIṭrifa the demon. Abū Bakr was afraid and hesitated; he used the excuse that he could not go to the demons' abode beneath the earth, could not deliver judgments on them, and could not understand their language. He then asked ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, but he gave the same answer as Abū Bakr. He also asked ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, who also gave the same answer. After that the Prophet asked ʿAlī to accompany the demon ʿIṭrifa; ʿAlī agreed without hesitation, put on his sword and accompanied ʿIṭrifa.

Salmān al-Fārisī goes on to relate that he went along with ʿAlī and ʿIṭrifa. They walked until they reached the river bed. When they were in the middle of the river bed ʿAlī looked at Salmān, thanked him, and asked him to return. Then the earth split open and ʿAlī and ʿIṭrifa descended into it.

When on the next morning ʿAlī did not return the people said that the demon must have deceived the Prophet and that ʿAlī was surely dead. The hypocrites cursed ʿAlī. As the sun came close to setting and most people were convinced that ʿAlī had been killed, the earth split. ʿAlī ascended with his sword dripping blood, accompanied by ʿIṭrifa. The Prophet rose towards him and kissed him between the eyes and on the forehead, and asked him why he was so late. ʿAli said: 'When I went to the *jinn* many of them had treated ʿIṭrifa unjustly. I called on them to do three things: to believe in God, to aver your standing as a prophet and your message, and to pay the *jizya* (head tax on free non-Muslims). They refused. Then I asked them to make peace with ʿIṭrifa and his people and to give them some pasture and water. They refused. After that I fought them with my sword and killed about eighty-thousand of them. When they saw what had happened to them they asked for protection and peace. Then they were safe, the conflict was resolved, and I stayed with them until now". After ʿAlī had finished speaking ʿIṭrifa thanked the Prophet and ʿAlī in his and the demons' name.[31]

Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Shihāb ad-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ at-Turāth, 1979), 1:74, s.v. al-Abṭaḥ.

31 Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ash-Shaʿrānī, *ʿUyūn al-muʿjizāt*, ed. by Ḥasan Jaʿfarī z-Zanjānī (Qumm: Āl al-ʿIbāʾ, 1384 AH), 113–117, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 18:86, *ḥadīth* 4, 63:90, *ḥadīth* 45; *Ḥilyat al-abrār*, 1:270. Aṭ-Ṭabarī relates in *Nawādir al-muʿjizāt* 21:52. Abū l-Fawāris, *Arbaʿīn*, *ḥadīth* 26, relates a different though similar tradition about the imams sending demons on urgent missions, see, for example: Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 2:308, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 39:183; Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, *Ḥilyat al-abrār fī faḍāʾil āl Muḥammad wa-ālihi l-aṭhār ʿalayhim as-salām*(2nd ed., Beirut:

In this tradition the demons are described as frightful creatures. In this case Shīᶜite writers perhaps used some of the features ascribed to the pre-Islamic soothsayer Saṭīḥ adh-Dhiᵓbī and transferred them to the demons.[32]

From this tradition we learn that ᶜAlī is not afraid of demons, and that he is stronger and braver than Abū Bakr, ᶜUmar and ᶜUthmān, nor does he refuse a request by the Prophet, as these three did. Indeed, ᶜAlī carries out the Prophet's wish and goes to do battle against the demons.

This tradition reflects the hatred which Shīᶜites harbor towards the three aforementioned figures. This is only natural, since in the real world they, according to the Shīᶜite view, robbed ᶜAlī of his rightful position as caliph; indeed, Shīᶜites have attached numerous unflattering epithets to them, and they curse them in numerous places.

The imam ᶜAlī appoints a caliph to the jinn

Abū Jaᶜfar (the fifth imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, d. 732 CE) relates that once when ᶜAlī gave a sermon on the pulpit of the mosque in al-Kūfa a snake-shaped demon entered through one of the mosque's entrances.[33] The people intended to kill it, but ᶜAlī made a sign to them that they should not do so. The snake kept crawling until it arrived at the pulpit. ᶜAlī indicated to it that it should wait for him until he finished his sermon. When ᶜAlī finished preaching he asked the snake: "Who are you?". The snake answered: "I am ᶜAmr b. ᶜUthmān, your caliph over the demons. My father died and willed that I come to you and ask for your opinion. So I have come to you, o Commander of the Faithful, to fol-

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Muᵓassasat al-Aᶜlamī li-l-Maṭbūᶜāt, 1992), 1:268. See also: al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 5:40–41; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 1:396, *ḥadīth* 7, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 46:282, *ḥadīth* 85; ᶜAbdallāh b. Nūrallāh al-Baḥrānī, *ᶜAwalim al-ᶜulūm wa-l-maᶜārif wa-l-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-akhbār wa-l-aqwāl*, ed. by the al-Imām al-Mahdī School (Qumm: the al-Imām al-Mahdī School, 1984–1994), 19:140, *ḥadīth* 14; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ᶜĀmilī, *Ithbāt al-hudāt bil-nuṣūṣ wa-l-muᶜjizāt* (Qumm: al-Maṭbaᶜā l-ᶜIlmiyya, 1957), 3:39; Abū l-Faḍl Sadīd ad-Dīn b. Shādhān b. Jibrāᵓil, *al-Faḍāᵓil* (Qumm: Dār ar-Riḍā, 1943), 60; Raḍī Ad-Dīn ᶜAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaᶜfar b. Ṭāwūs, *al-Yaqīn bi-khtiṣāṣ mawlānā ᶜAlī bi-imrat at-taḥṣīn* (1st ed., Qumm: Muᵓassasat Dār al-Kutub, 1992), 262.

32 Saṭīḥ ad-Dhiᵓbī was a pre-Islamic soothsayer from Yemen who was described in imaginary terms, such as that he had no bones in his body except for his skull, that his face was on his chest, and that he possessed neither head nor neck. For more details on him, see: Jawād ᶜAlī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī tārīkh al-ᶜarab qabla l-islām* (2nd ed., Baghdad: Baghdad University, 1993), 6:765; Zakariyyā Ibn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī, *ᶜAjāᵓib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāᵓib al-mawjūdāt*, ed. by Ferdinand Wustenfeld (Wiesbaden:Sanding, 1967), 1:371.

33 Shīᶜite sources state that because the snake came into the mosque in al-Kūfa through that specific entrance, it became known as the "snake door". Previously it was called the "great door". The new name became well-known, to the chagrin of the Umayyad caliph Muᶜāwiya b. Sufyān, because of its association with ᶜAlī. Muᶜāwiya therefore had an elephant placed next to the door, in the hope that the name would be changed to the "elephant door". After five years Muᶜāwiya asked someone from al-Kūfa about the door: "Have you ever entered or left the mosque through the elephant door?". The man answered: "You mean the snake door, next to which it stands". So Muᶜāwiya ordered the elephant taken away. According to another version of the tradition, the elephant dropped dead. The door, which is the mosque's main entrance on the north-eastern side, opposite the direction of prayer, is still known by the two names to this day, and is still very popular. For more details see: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 97:406, *ḥadīth* 65; Ḥusayn b. as-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Burāqī n-Najafī, *Tārīkh al-Kūfa* (4th ed., Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāᵓ, 1987), 53–54.

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low any order you may give". ᶜAlī replied: "I command you to obey God and to take your father's place among the demons. You are my caliph over them". Thereupon the demon ᶜAmr bade ᶜAlī farewell and left.[34]

In this tradition the demon, in the shape of a snake, is recognized by ᶜAlī, who speaks to it in its own language. The demons are shown to be subservient and obedient to ᶜAlī.

The sixth imam Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE) relates that one Friday ᶜAlī was preaching from the pulpit at al-Kūfa when he heard voices from the audience. When ᶜAlī asked what was happening, the people told him that a great, fearful snake, with a head larger than a camel's had just entered through the main door. The people divided into two groups, and wanted to kill the snake, but ᶜAlī asked them not to hurt him. He informed them that the snake was a demon sent by the *jinn* to him to ask him about a certain matter. The snake then proceeded between the lines of worshippers until it ascended the pulpit, put its mouth in ᶜAlī's ear and clucked. ᶜAlī then sounded a similar cluck. The snake then descended from the pulpit, crawled among the worshippers, and when it reached the elephant door it disappeared. When ᶜAlī was asked about the snake he said: "It is my caliph over the demons. Its name is ad-Durjān b. Mālik. The demons had a dispute about some issues and sent him to ask me. I answered him and he went back".[35]

According to another version the snake was one of the rulers of the demons who had doubts about a case and came to ask ᶜAlī for a ruling and then bid him goodbye and left.[36]

In yet another version the snake was ᶜAlī's messenger to the demons. He said to ᶜAlī: "If the people had loved you as much as the demons love and obey you, no human would be tormented". According to another tradition the snake was the Prophet Muḥammad's regent over the demons, who came to ᶜAlī to seek his advice after a bloody dispute broke out among the demons.[37]

The demons fear the imam ᶜAlī

It is related that once a *jinnī* was seated next to the Prophet when ᶜAlī entered. The *jinnī* then began to cringe out of respect for and fear of ᶜAlī. The *jinnī* said to the Prophet: "I was once flying with the *marada* (a kind of demon) to heaven, five-hundred years before the creation of Adam, when I saw this man (i.e. ᶜAlī),[38] who wounded me and cast me down. I fell to the seventh earth, and I saw him there as I saw him in the sky".

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34 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 1:396, *ḥadīth* 6; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, 97, *ḥadīth* 7, whence al-Ḥurr al-ᶜĀmilī, *Ithbāt al-hudāt*, 2:404, *ḥadīth* 10; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 39:163, *ḥadīth* 3 took it from al-Kulaynī and ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ* 854/3, *ḥadīth* 69; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 2:251. In al-Ḥasan b. Abī l-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad ad-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb* (1st ed., Qumm: Dār ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī li-n-Nashr, 1991), 2:278 the snake's head is described as larger than the head of a camel, and it is related that the people split into two groups on either side of the mosque, out of fear of the snake.

35 Ash-Shaᶜrānī, *ᶜUyūn al-muᶜjizāt*, 56–57, *ḥadīth* 9.

36 Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī l-Fattāl an-Naysābūrī, *Rawḍat al-wāᶜiẓīn wa-baṣīrat al-muttaᶜiẓin* (Qumm: Dār ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī li-n-Nashr, 1966), 119; al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, 183–184, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 39:178; Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī ṭ-Ṭūsī b. Ḥamza l-Mashhadī, *ath-Thāqib fī l-manāqib*, ed. by Nabīl Riḍā ᶜAlwān (1st ed., Beirut: Dār az-Zahrāʾ, 1991), 248, *ḥadīth* no. 2.

37 Ash-Shaᶜrānī, *ᶜUyūn al-muᶜjizāt*, 56–57, *ḥadīth* 9.

38 Al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, 217, whence the author in al-Baḥrānī, *Ḥilyat al-abrār*, 2:15–16, *ḥadīth* 3; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 2:445–446.

In this tradition ᶜAlī is said to have fought the infidel demons even before he was created, when he was still in the shadow world. The demons thus recognize him and know his strength, and therefore fear him and bear him a grudge. It would appear that here Shīᶜites want to impress upon the reader that God had given only ᶜAlī the power to do battle against the infidel demons; this is a great honor which God has bestowed on ᶜAlī.

In one tradition transmitted in the Prophet's name ᶜAlī is said to have killed forty-thousand *ᶜifrīt* (devils) and to have converted forth-thousand tribes of demons. ᶜAlī is the only one of the Prophet's close Companions who fought and subdued demons, and converted them to Islam. It is thus not to be wondered that they are also described as seeking his advice on matters great and small.

Demons complain to the imams and seek their advice

In a tradition[39] about Ḥakīma,[40] daughter of the imam Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī ar-Riḍā (d. 835 CE) she is reported to have said: "I saw the imam ᶜAlī ar-Riḍā (d. 818 CE) standing at the door of firewood shed and whispering, but did not see anyone there. So I asked him: 'Sir, to whom are you whispering?', and he answered: 'I am whispering to ᶜĀmir az-Zahrāᵓī, a demon who came to ask me something and to make a complaint'.[41] Ḥakīma then asked him if she could hear what the demon said, and the imam replied: 'If you were to hear his speech you would have a fever which would last a year'. She answered: 'Sir, I would like to hear it'. Ar-Riḍā said: 'Hear!'. She heard a kind of whistle, and suffered a year from a fever.

From this tradition we see that demons are said to ask the advice of the imam ar-Riḍā (one of ᶜAlī's descendants), that the imam knows them by name and understands their language; and anyone who hears their speech, even a member of the imam's family, suffers from a year of fever, except for the imam himself.

Demons in the service and at the disposal of the imams

A number of traditions relate events of this kind. One of these reports that the sixth imam Abū ᶜAbdallāh Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE), when asked by some of his followers why ᶜAlī gave his daughter Umm Kulthūm in marriage to a certain person[42] (ᶜUmar b. al-

39 This tradition is quoted in: al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 1:295–296, *ḥadīth* 5, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwar*, 27:25, *ḥadīth* 17, as well as 49:69, *ḥadīth* 91 and 60:67, *ḥadīth* 6; al-Ḥurr al-ᶜĀmilī, *Ithbāt al-hudāt*, 3:249, *ḥadīth* 11; al-Baḥrānī, *ᶜAwālim al-ᶜulūm*, 22:75, *ḥadīth* 6, whence Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 3:344; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 7:35, *ḥadīth* 2133/31.

40 Her full name: Ḥakīma, daughter of the ninth imam Muḥammad al-Jawād (d. 835 CE). She was a pious woman who transmitted a number of traditions in her father's name. She was present at the birth of the twelfth imam Muḥammad al-Mahdī and died in 274/887. She was buried in the city of Sāmarrāᵓ, next to the tenth imam ᶜAlī l-Hādī (d. 868 CE) and the eleventh imam al-Ḥasan al-ᶜAskarī (d. 873 CE). For more details see: al-Barqī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 62; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāᶜiẓīn*, 1:252; ᶜAlī b. Yūnis an-Nabbāṭī l-Bayyāḍī, *aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm ilā mustaḥiqqī t-taqdīm* (1st ed., an-Najaf: al-Maktaba l-Ḥaydariyya, 1964), 2:199, *ḥadīth* 2, 2:209, no. 1.

41 Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 4:344, ad-Dahrānī.

42 ᶜUmar's name is not mentioned explicitly in the tradition, because of the Shīᶜites' scorn and hatred of this person.

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Khaṭṭāb), and why he did not save her from this marriage, answered as follows: "ʿAlī did not give his daughter Umm Kulthūm in marriage to ʿUmar. Rather he sent a Jewish she-demon from Najrān by the name of Saḥīqa daughter of Ḥarīriyya[43], who took on the form of Umm Kulthūm, who disappeared from view. The she-demon was sent to ʿUmar under the pretext that she was Umm Kulthūm, and she remained with him until he became afraid of her one day. She then went off to Najrān,[44] and then ʿAlī once more showed Umm Kulthūm to the people."[45]

This tradition shows that ʿAlī is considered capable of using demons for his own purposes, in this case to prevent having to give his daughter in marriage to the hated ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. The demon here helps the imam to avoid a situation which he would have found abhorrent.

Furthermore, this tradition shows that the imams are considered to possess authority over Jewish and not only Muslim demons (this is a very significant characteristic), and that they know their names as well, in addition to having authority over them.

Another matter which is reflected in this tradition is the great hatred which Shīʿites harbor towards ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. According to this story ʿUmar never had sexual relations with ʿAlī's daughter. This is important for Shīʿites, who scorn the Prophet's Companions, and especially Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Many Shīʿite traditions curse these men, and the present tradition consoles Shīʿites with the thought that Umm Kulthūm did not marry the "evil" ʿUmar.

Demons inform the imams about people who are negligent about carrying out their orders

Demons of all sexes and ages are subservient to the imams; they serve them and inform them about people who are slack about carrying out their orders.

In a tradition transmitted in the name of Mūsā b. Bakr the latter relates: "Abū l-Ḥasan the first, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, gave me a note with tasks and told me to do what it said". Mūsā then placed the note under the oratory and tarried about carrying out what it said. One day Mūsā encountered the imam ʿAlī, who asked him about the note. Mūsā answered that it was at home. ʿAlī then replied: "O Mūsā, if I give you a command carry it out, or I shall be angry at you". Mūsā then realized that the note had come into ʿAlī's possession by means of young demons.[46]

Young demons, like their parents, are said to be in constant contact with the imams, and inform them of anything which may be of interest to them.

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43 In some sources she is called Saḥīqa daughter of Jarīriyya: ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, 2:826; in others she is called Suḥīna daughter of Jarīriyya: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42:88, *ḥadīth* 16.

44 Najrān is a town in the Hamadān region of Yemen, named after its founder, Najrān b. Zaydān. For more details see: ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā istaʿjam min asmāʾ al-bilād wa-l-mawāḍiʿ*, ed. by Muṣṭafā as-Saqqā (3rd ed., Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1996), 1298; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 5:226–271; Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, *ar-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār*, ed. by Iḥsān ʿAbbās (2nd ed., Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1984), 573–575.

45 Ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, 2:825, *ḥadīth* 39, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 42:88, *ḥadīth* 16; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 3:202–203, *ḥadīth* 828.

46 *Qurb al-isnād* 142, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 48:44, *ḥadīth* 24; al-Baḥrānī, *ʿAwālim al-ʿulūm*, 21:70, *ḥadīth* 1, 150, *ḥadīth* 1; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 6:282, *ḥadīth* 2009/79.

Demons steal money from people and the imams return the stolen goods to their owners

Imams know the secrets of demons and where they live; and the demons obey them. In this context it is related of Abū Isḥāq as-Sabīᶜī[47] and al-Ḥārith al-Aᶜwar[48] that once they saw an old Jew named Ḥajar al-Ḥimyarī crying. ᶜAlī saw him and asked him why he was crying. The Jew said: "I am a merchant. I left Sābāṭ al-Madāʾin[49] with sixty donkeys, and when I passed this and that place I lost my donkeys. I don't know where they could have gone". ᶜAlī said to him: "O brother of the Jews, we (i.e. the imams) know all troubles and destinies, what was and what will be". Thereupon ᶜAlī asked the Jew to accompany him to the place where he had lost his donkeys. When they arrived ᶜAlī prayed two prostrations, made an invocation, and recited the following verse: "There shall be sent against you a flash of fire" (Q 55:35). He then addressed the demons: "If you do not return his donkeys to him the treaty between us will be null and void; I shall smite you with my sword until you return to the command of God". When ᶜAlī finished speaking the Jew's donkeys appeared before ᶜAlī and their owner the Jew.[50] Thereupon the Jew converted to Islam, became a Shīᶜite, and confirmed that ᶜAlī was Muḥammad's regent.

From this tradition we learn that Shīᶜites believe ᶜAlī to have had a treaty with the demons. Perhaps the treaty is associated with the day when ᶜAlī was said to have fought a battle against the demons at the Dhāt al-ᶜAlam well. ᶜAlī's invocation and prayer here are answered immediately and he performs a miracle.

Demons seek the advice of the imams on various matters

It is related in the name of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855 CE): "I entered the presence of the seventh imam Mūsā l-Kāẓim b. Jaᶜfar[51] (d. 799 CE) to recite for him, when I saw that he had a large snake by him, which put its mouth on the imam's ear, as if it was speaking to him. When the snake paused, the imam Mūsā spoke to him in a way which Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal did not understand. Then the snake crawled away. The imam said to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: "This snake is in fact a messenger from the demons which took on the shape of a snake. It came to me as a messenger from the demons, who had a matter on which they could not agree. So this demon came to me and I gave it an answer".

47 His full name: ᶜAmr b. ᶜAbdallāh b. ᶜAlī Abū Isḥāq al-Hamadānī as-Sabīᶜī l-Kūfī, a follower of the Prophet. For more details see: aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 98 no. 956–2, 248 no. 3465–374.

48 His full name: al-Ḥārith b. ᶜAbdallāh b. Kaᶜb b. Asad b. Nakhla b. Ḥarath b. Sabᶜ b. Ṣaᶜb b. Muᶜāwiya l-Hamadānī, a scholar and companion of ᶜAlī. For details see: Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 94 no. 353; al-Barqī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 4; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 94 no. 927–3; al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ᶜallāma l-ḥillī*, 54–55 no. 8; al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-kashshī*, 88–89 no. 142–143.

49 One of seven neighboring cities in Iraq (al-ᶜAtīqa, al-Iskandar, Ṭayfsūn, Asfānīr, ar-Rūmiyya, Bahrasīr and Sābāṭ). The city, located on either side of the Tigris, one parasang from the city of Bahramsīr, it was the seat of the Sassanid dynasty. For more details see: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Shihāb ad-Dīn Abū ᶜAbdallāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muᶜjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ at-Turāth, 1979), 5:74–75; Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim al-Ḥimyarī, *ar-Rawḍ al-miᶜṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār*, ed. by Iḥsān ᶜAbbās (2nd ed., Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1984), 526–529.

50 Ibn Ḥamza l-Mashhadī, *ath-Thāqib fī l-manāqib*, 269, *ḥadīth* 1; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 1:303–306.

51 The seventh of the imams of Twelver Shīᶜism. For details see: E. Kohlberg, "Mūsā l-Kāẓim", *EI*², Vol. VII (1993), pp. 399–400.

Then the imam Mūsā asked Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal not to tell anyone about this until after his death. And so it was.[52]

In this traditions the *jinn* ask the imam for advice. The imams would appear to be responsible for the *jinn* and to understand their language. In this case the imam treats his actions as a hidden miracle which he does not want to be publicized during his own lifetime, in contrast to ʿAlī.

Here we see that different Shīʿite writers are not clear about whether to treat such supernatural events connected with the imams as hidden or overt miracles.

In another tradition it is related in the name of Saʿd al-Iskāf[53] that he came to the fifth imam Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732 CE) several times. When he came to the entrance of the house he knocked on the door. The imam asked him to wait until he gave him permission to enter. He waited for a long time under the hot sun. As he waited he saw a group of people come out of the imam's house, with beautiful faces, like the color of yellow locusts, covered with turbans, looking like black men, who were exhausted by worship. Afterwards the imam gave Saʿd permission to enter. Saʿd asked him about these people, and the imam answered: "These are demons who are your [the Shīʿites'] brothers. They come to us to ask questions about their religion, what is permitted to them and what is forbidden".[54]

From this tradition we learn that the Shīʿites believe that after the demons converted to Shīʿism under ʿAlī they sought the advice of the imams on matters pertaining to their faith.

The demons, as reflected in these traditions, would appear after their conversion to Islam to have become entirely dependent on the imams, who made every decision for them. The Shīʿite imams are thus in fact said to have complete control over the demons.

What the Shīʿite writers want to say is that even the demons respect the imams and seek their advice, while certain Muslim humans do not recognize the authority of ʿAlī and the other imams. God created the demons, and God willed that all His creatures, including the demons, recognize the imams' authority.

The imams make use of demons in urgent cases

The imams utilize the *jinn* for various purposes, especially when the matter is urgent and requires a long distance to be traversed in a short time, and the demons oblige. Shīʿite sources report that one of the characteristic traits of demons is their ability to move from

52 Al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 6:340, *ḥadīth* 2036/106.

53 His full name: Saʿd b. Ṭarīf (or Saʿd b. al-Khaffāf) al-Ḥanẓalī l-Iskāf, or ad-Duʾalī, a client of Banū Tamīm al-Kūfī. He was a judge, a transmitter of traditions, and a "nāwūsī" (i.e., he taught and interpreted the sayings of the sixth imam Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣadiq). For details see: Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 538; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 115, *ḥadīth* 1147–17; al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma l-ḥillī*, 226, *ḥadīth* 1; al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-kashshī*, 214–215, *ḥadīth* 384; an-Najāshī, *Rijāl an-najāshī*, 178, *ḥadīth* 468.

54 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 1:295, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 27:20, *ḥadīth* 11, 63:102, *ḥadīth* 64; from al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, 100, *ḥadīth* 11; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 5:35–36. A similar tradition is quoted in: al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 5:37–38; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt* 97, 5; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 101, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 27:19, *ḥadīth* 18; from al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt* and in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 63:103, *ḥadīth* 67, taken from aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*.

one place to another quickly. In this context Sadīr al-Ṣayrafī[55] reports: "The imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732 CE) ordered me to arrange some matters for him in al-Madīna. I left, and when I was passing through the region of Fajj ar-Rawḥāʾ (between Mecca and Medina, on the road which the Prophet took when traveling to Mecca and to Badr) suddenly a man appeared. I thought he was thirsty and offered him water. But he said that he needed no water. He gave me a letter written not long ago, with the ink still wet, signed by the imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir Abū Jaʿfar. I asked him when did he receive the letter, and the man said: 'Now'". Sadīr opened the letter, and found it to contain a number of matters which the imam wanted him to take care of. Then Sadīr looked up, but the man who had given him the letter had disappeared.[56]

When Sadīr met the imam again he asked him about the man who had brought him the letter. The imam al-Bāqir replied: "Know you, Sadīr, that we (i.e. the imams) have servants from among the *jinn* and if we need something done in a hurry we send them".

The demon here served as an express postman. The imam knows that demons can move very quickly from one place to another and therefore uses them when there is need for speed.

In the same vein, Abū Ḥamza th-Thumālī[57] relates that once when the fifth imam Abū Jaʿfar (Muḥammad al-Bāqir) was on a minor pilgrimage and sat at al-Ḥijr,[58] he saw a *jinnī* coming from the direction of al-Masʿā.[59] He approached al-Ḥijr and circled around the Kaʿba for a week. Then it went to al-Muqām,[60] stood on its tail, and prayed two prostra-

55 His full name: Sadīr (or Salma) b. Ḥakīm b. Ṣuhayb Abū l-Faḍl al-Ṣayrafī, a client, originally from al-Kūfa, father of Ḥanān and Khālid. For details see: Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 166, *ḥadīth* 662; al-Barqī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 15, 18; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 114, *ḥadīth* 1134–4; 137, *ḥadīth* 1442–15, 223, *ḥadīth* 2994–232; al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma l-ḥillī*, 85, *ḥadīth* 3.

56 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, 1:395, *ḥadīth* 4; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, 96, *ḥadīth* 2; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 100; al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 5:34–35. For a similar tradition about the quick services which demons render the imams see aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 103.

57 His full name: Abū Ḥamza ath-Thumālī Thābit b. Dīnār (cognomen Abū Dīnār or Abū Ṣafiyya), an Arabian from the tribe of Azd. The imam ʿAlī Riḍā (d. 818 CE) said of him that he was in his time like Luqmān in his time. He was a companion of the imam Mūsā l-Kāẓim and died in 150/767. For more details on him see: Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 396 no. 26; al-Barqī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 8, 9, 47; al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, 201–203, *ḥadīth* 353–357.

58 Al-Ḥijr or Ḥijr Ismāʿīl, known also by the name of al-Ḥaṭīm, is a place a bit to the north of the Kaʿba, with two graves, that of Ismāʿīl and that of his mother Hājar. Today it consists of a semi-circular 1.30m high construction, one of whose ends faces north and the other west. For details see: Taqī ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī l-Fāsī l-Makkī l-Mālikī, *Shifāʾ al-gharām bi-akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām*, ed. by ʿAbd as-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1985), 1:339–351.

59 Al-Masʿā is a river bed between Jabal al-Ṣafā (or Jabal Qabīs) and al-Marwa (or Jabal Qayqaʿān), located at a distance of seven-hundred cubits from each other. The length of al-Masʿā is a matter of dispute between different sources. For details see: Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Azraqī, *Akhbār makka* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1389/1969), 2:95; ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. by Adrian van Leuven and Andre Veery (Tunis: ad-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Kitāb, 1992), 1:309; Suʿūd b. ʿAbdallāh al-Farīsān, "al-Masʿā baʿad at-tawsiʿa l-jadīda" ("al-Masʿā after the New Expansion"), URL: www.islamonline.net.

60 Al-Muqām is the ancient rock on which Abraham is said to have stood when he built the Kaʿba. The rock, according to tradition, was originally a sapphire from heaven whose luster was taken away by God; otherwise it would have illuminated the entire world. It is also related that Abraham stood on

tions at sunset. ʿAṭāʾ and other people saw it, and they went to the imam al-Bāqir to ask him if he had seen the *jinnī*. The imam answered in the affirmative, and then asked his companions to go to it and tell it that there are slaves and blacks at the Kaʿba, that the time for it to perform its ritual was ended, and that the imam was afraid of what would happen to it at the hands of the slaves and blacks. The imam added that they should tell the *jinnī* that it must leave the Kaʿba. And indeed, the moment it was told to leave it did so and disappeared in the air.[61]

This tradition tells us that demons are believed to perform the minor pilgrimage like humans, and to circle the Kaʿba more times than humans. We also learn that the imam protects the demon and the demon obeys the imam.

Al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar[62] relates the following story: "The money of the 'fifth' was transferred to the imam Abū ʿAbdallāh (Muḥammad al-Bāqir) from Khurasān with two of his companions. Throughout the entire journey they continuously checked the money, until they reached the city of ar-Rayy, where a friend gave them a purse with one-thousand dirhams, and then continued on their journey, still checking the money and the purse every day until they approached al-Madīna. Then one of them said to the other: "Come on, let us check the money". He looked and saw that the money was alright, except for the purse which the man in the city of ar-Rayy had given them. One of them said to the other: "What shall we say to the imam now?". The other replied: "The imam is saintly and hopefully will already know what we will say to him". When they entered al-Madīna they went to the imam and gave him the money. He asked them about the purse and they told him the story. The imam asked them: "Would you recognize the purse if you saw it?". They replied: "Yes". The imam then asked his slave girl to bring the purse. She brought it and they recognized it as the same one which had been lost. The imam then explained to the two men: "I needed money in the middle of the night, so I sent a Shīʿite *jinnī* to fetch me the purse from your possessions".[63]

From this tradition we learn that Shīʿites believe that there are Shīʿite demons who do the imams' bidding and carry out missions with lightning speed.

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this rock when he called on the people to make the pilgrimage, and also when his wife washed Ismāʿīl's head. For more details see: al-Mālikī, *shifāʾ al-gharām*, 2:327–338.

61 Al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-Maʿājiz*, 5:104–105; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, 204, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 46:252, *ḥadīth* 48; al-Baḥrānī, *ʿAwālim al-ʿulūm*, 19:78 no. 1, from Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 4:187; ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, 1:285, *ḥadīth* 18.

62 His full name: al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Juʿfī Abū ʿAbdallāh, known as Abū Muḥammad al-Juʿfī, a Kūfī client who reported traditions in the name of Abū l-Ḥasan. He was morally corrupt and the traditions he transmitted are not considered by Shīʿite scholars to be very reliable. He was a rhetorician who transmitted reports of the two imams Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā l-Kāẓim. He is said to have been the author of a number of books, considered unreliable. For more details about him see: an-Najāshī, *Rijāl an-Najāshī*, 416, *ḥadīth* 1112; al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma l-Ḥillī*, 258, *ḥadīth* 1; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 307 no. 4530–555; al-Barqī, *Kitāb ar-Rijāl*, 34; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Ghaḍāʾirī, *Rijāl ibn al-Ghaḍāʾirī* (2nd ed., Qumm: Muʾassasat Ismāʿīliyān, 1944), 6:131.

63 Al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, 5:321–323; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, 99, *ḥadīth* 9, published in al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Ithbāt al-hudāt*, 3:98, *ḥadīth* 70; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 27:20, *ḥadīth* 10, 63:101, *ḥadīth* 63; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, 47:65, *ḥadīth* 5, from al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, and ar-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, 2:777, *ḥadīth* 101.

Demons which protect the imams

It is related that the Prophet once fell ill. His daughter Fāṭima came to visit him with her two sons, the future imams al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. She returned home and left her two sons to sleep at their grandfather's house. When Fāṭima returned awakened while the Prophet continued to sleep. They left the Prophet's house on a dark and stormy night. They saw a light, went to it and arrived at the garden of the Banū n-Najjār.[64] The two remained there, protected by a demon in the shape of a snake with hair like brocade, and two wings with which it covered the two. When the Prophet found them the snake crawled and said: "I swear by you and your angels that I protected your prophet's two cubs". The Prophet then asked it who it was and the snake answered: "I am a messenger from the *jinn*. The Prophet asked: "Which *jinn*?". The snake answered: "The *jinn* of Naṣībīn,[65] a group of the Banū Malīḥ. We forgot a verse of the Qurᵓān so they sent me to you to teach us what we had forgotten. And when I arrived here I heard a voice calling out: O snake, these two cubs of God's Messenger, protect them from evil and harm, from the misfortunes of night and day. So I protected them and brought them back to you safe and sound". The snake then took the verse and left, and the Prophet took al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and returned them to their home.[66]

In this tradition a demon in the form of a winged snake comes to the Prophet to inquire about a lost Qurᵓānic verse. He belongs to a tribe of demons and comes from a faraway city. A voice, perhaps that of another demon, tells it to guard the Prophet's grandsons. This task appears to take precedence over obtaining the lost verse, since only after he completed the task of protecting the children did he ask for the verse.

The Shīᶜite appear to express a number of ideas through this tradition. First of all, the demons recognize the imams and acknowledge their power. Their loyalty to them is such that they delay learning a verse of the Qurᵓān in order to protect them, while some people refuse to recognize the authority of the imams.

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64 Banū n-Najjār are a clan of the Medinan Khazraj tribe, which joined the Prophet, and maternal relatives of ᶜAbdallāh the Prophet's father, and called Banū Mālik b. an-Najjār. The lived in Medina, in Zuqāq aṭ-ṭiwāl, where the Prophet's father was buried. They were called Banū n-Najjār because one of their forefathers had cut off the hand of his brother with an ax, which the Arabs described as "he carved (*najara*) his brother's hand". For more details see: Aḥmad Yāsīn al-Khiyārī, *Tārīkh maᶜālim al-madīna l-munawwara qadīman wa-ḥadīthan*, with a commentary by ᶜAbdallāh Amīn al-Kurdī (Medina: Maṭābiᶜ Dār al-ᶜIlm, 1410/1990), 28.

65 Naṣībīn is a city in Mesopotamia, on the caravan road between Mosul and Damascus. It is an ancient cities with many streams and gardens, a six-day ride from Mosul. It was conquered by the Muslim commander ᶜAiyāḍ b. Ghanm al-Fihrī during the reign of the caliph ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb in the year 18/639. It was a Byzantine city, and after its conquest ᶜAiyāḍ populated it with Muslims. For details see: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muᶜjam al-buldān*, 5:288–289; Muḥammad ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim al-Ḥimyarī, *ar-Rawḍ al-miᶜṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār*, ed. by Iḥsān ᶜAbbās (2nd ed., Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1984), 577.

66 Al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜājiz*, 4:9–11; Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as ash-Shaykh aṣ-Ṣadūq, *Amālī ṣ-Ṣadūq* (4th ed., Qumm: Muᵓassasat an-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1983), 360, *ḥadīth* 8.

When do demons appear to the imams

Demons appear to the imams on Sunday, but do not appear to any other mortals. A tradition quotes the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq as saying: "Sundays are for the *jinn*, and then they do not appear to anyone except us".[67]

Conclusion

The preceding selection of traditions concerning the Twelver Shīʿite imams' relations with demons provides an indication of how extensive the mention of demons is in Shīʿite literature and religious thought. Demons are, of course, common in folk literature, but in Shīʿite thought they play very specific roles as reflected in the context in which they appear and the relations they are described as having to the imams.

Reports of demons and their relations to the imams are not limited to a single genre but appear in various types of Shīʿite literature, mainly as a means for demonstrating the importance of their imams and their supernatural powers.

More specifically, the use of demons in Shīʿite traditions and stories can be said to have the following aims:

A) To provide comfort to Shīʿite society in the face of political oppression. These stories can make imaginary things seem to come true.
B) To convince Shīʿites in times of weakness that there are strong forces which are willing and able to help them solve their problems, in the form of the imams. The stories about the demons help persuade them that the imams will eventually be able to fulfill their hopes and improve their lot.
C) To show Shīʿite believers that the imams are saints and miracle workers, and to disseminate the Shīʿite creed.

One last comment must be made, namely that the historical authenticity of these stories is not at all an issue. Even if all the stories are fabricated from whole cloth, the important point is the purpose of Shīʿite writers in disseminating the stories and passing it on to future generations, until they became part of the Shīʿite heritage.

67 Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir ad-darajāt*, 95–96, chapter 18, *ḥadīth* 1.

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THE SEA IN THE MIRACLES OF ŠĪᶜITE IMĀMS

According to the Šīᶜite[1] faith imāms are endowed with certain abilities not given to ordinary mortals, among them the performance of miracles. Miracles are used as proof to convince those who would cast doubt on an imām's right to his title. The sea often provides the background for a miracle and may play a prominent role in its unfolding. It is to a description and analysis of this motif that the present article is dedicated. Two reasons have dictated the choice of the present topic.

First of all, the role of miracles in Šīᶜite thought has received very little scholarly attention so far. In fact, we are aware of only three publications that have dealt with this subject from a number of different perspectives. Amir-Moezzi's paper provides a survey of miracles ascribed to Šīᶜite imāms;[2] Etan Kohlberg's study focuses on miracles associated with imāms' vision;[3] and Judith Loebnstein deals specifically with the miracles attributed to the imām Ǧaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq.[4] But the reason why we have chosen the specific motif of the sea is the prominent role which it plays in many of the imāms' miracles.

This study is based on the following basic Šīᶜite compositions:

1) *Baṣāʾir al-daraǧāt fi faḍāʾil Āl Muḥammad* by Abū Ǧaᶜfar b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farūḫ al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī[5] (d. 290/903), a contemporary of the tenth Twelver Šīᶜite imām ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī (d. 254/868) and the eleventh imām, Ḥasan al-ᶜAskarī (d. 260/874). This composition is of particular importance for the purposes of the present study because it contains Šīᶜite traditions that go back to very early times.

2) *Al-Ḫarāʾiǧ wa ʾl-ǧarāʾiḥ* by Quṭb al-Dīn Saᶜīd b. Hibat Allāh al-Rāwindī

1 – The terms "Šīᶜite", "Šīᶜism", and "Šīᶜah" in the present paper refer to Twelver Šīᶜism.

2 – M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Savoir c'est pouvoir. Exégèses et implications du miracle dans l'imamisme ancien (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine V)", in: D. Aigle (éd.), *Miracle et karāma. Hagiographies médiévales comparées 2*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000, p. 251-286.

3 – E. Kolhberg, "Vision and the Imams", in: *Vision d'Islam: Melanges islamologiques offerts a Daniel Gimaret*, Louvain-Paris, 2001, p. 125-157.

4 – J. Loebnstein, "Miracles in Shiᶜi Thought: A Case-Study of the Miracles attributed to Imam Jaᶜfar Al-Sadiq", *Arabica*, 50 (2003), p. 199-244.

5 – For details see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (m. 290/902-3) et son *Kitāb Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt*", *JA*, 280 (1992), p. 223-224.

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(d. 573/1177). This is a book which is dedicated exclusively to reporting the miracles performed by the imāms. Its author was the teacher of the scholar Ibn Shahrāšūb.

3) *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Šahrāšūb (d. 588/1192), a very well-known Šīʿite scholar in his day, who was respected in Sunnī circles as well. The book, a biographical chronicle of the Šīʿite imāms, relates also the miracles ascribed to them.

4) *Biḥār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mağlisī (d. 1110/1598), a resident of the city of Iṣfahān who devoted his life in collecting Šīʿite traditions. In the year 1686 the ruling Safavid governor appointed him to the position of Šayḫ al-Islām, which he utilized effectively for the purpose of advancing the cause of Twelver Šīʿism. His book *Biḥār al-anwār* contains traditions collected from numerous different sources dating from various time periods, among them the three above-mentioned books. This has the advantage that versions of traditions relating the same events can easily be compared.

In what follows the miracles associated with the sea have been classified into a number of different groups. The main criterion of classification is the miracle's main motif, in addition to the chronological order of the imāms to which they are attributed. In case a number of traditions relate the same miracle with no significant differences, most were relegated to the footnotes, if not ignored altogether.Below we shall describe and analyze those miracles attributed to the imāms in which the sea plays a crucial role, and attempt to answer the following questions:

- How does the imām perform the miracle?
- How is the sea depicted?
- What role does the vessel play?
- What is the imām's role in these miracles?
- What types of seas are mentioned in these miracles, and what is the function of each?
- What purpose did the composition of the stories about these miracles serve?

Before beginning our description and analysis of sea-related miracles, however, we shall provide a background discussion of the sea in world and Arab culture, in particular in the Qurʾān and its commentaries, as well as a short discourse on the significance of miracles among Šīʿites.

The sea in world and Arab culture

A. *The sea in world culture*

Studies on the sea in world literature usually deal with the literary output of peoples with a rich seafaring tradition. A major focus of such studies has been the sea associations of medieval poets and writers. Descriptions of the sea and of the fleets which traversed it abound in poems of the times, especially of seafaring peoples such as the English and the Norsemen, in whose lives the sea and maritime travel were an important element. Their poets, unsurprisingly, wrote descriptions of the seas, and compared their people's seafaring vessels to land animals, especially horses. Karin Olsen has dealt with the latter type of imagery in

Old English and Old Norse poetry whose composers, as she noted in her article, were influenced by the social and cultural elements in their societies.[6] Lena B. Morton has dealt with the impact of the sea on English poetry from Anglo-Saxon times to the Romantic period. Her study focuses on two main aspects of sea poetry: realistic descriptions and legendary elements.[7] In Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's *Analecta Husserliana: The Year Book of Phenomenological Research* an entire volume in whose writing thirty-five scholars participated is devoted to the sea and the maritime environment in the literatures of the world, and to the important role which the sea has played in the intellectual life of human societies.[8]

B. The sea in Arabic literature

In the last thirty years and more only a handful of articles have dealt with the subject of the sea in Arabic literature, which have laid the foundation for hopefully more comprehensive studies in future. These studies show the importance of the sea in Arabic and Islamic compositions, in literature, poetry, journey chronicles, geographical essays and more, thus demonstrating the Arabs' close mental and artistic ties to the sea in the Middle Ages. There are also some modern studies on Islamic maritime jurisprudence[9] and on the political history of Muslim maritime powers.

The sea as a theme in Arabic poetry has been dealt with in a variety of articles and in chapters of books on Arabic literature in general. Ḥusayn ʿAṭwān, in his *Wasf al-baḥr wa ʾl-nahr fī ʾl-šiʿr al-ʿarabī (Depictions of Sea and River in Arabic Poetry)*, attempted to refute the common opinion in Western scholarship that Arabic poetry did not contain depictions of seas and rivers. In the book's first two parts ʿAṭwān analyzes a group of pre-Islamic poems which he drew from a number of different sources. He concludes that these ancient Arab poets were well-acquainted with the sea and that their impressions of it appear in their works. This is a trend which was continued by the poets of the Umayyad period. In Part Three he deals with the maritime connections in the poetry of the early

6 – K. Olsen, "Animated Ships in Old English and Old Norse Poetry", in: *Animals and the Symbolic in Mediaeval Art and Literature*, ed. by L.A.J.R. Houwen, Groningen, Egbert Forsten, 1997, p. 53-66. Before the present era poets and other writers also wrote about the nature of the sea and about ships, and expressed their own feelings about the sea. They also used the imagery of land animals, especially horses. See Jens Braarvig's study of Old Indic and Vedic literature (c. 1000 BCE) and Greek mythology: J. Braarvig, "Horses and Ships in Vedic and Old Greek Material", *The Journal of Indo-European Studies,* 25 (1997), p. 345-351. For an account of ancient Jewish stories about the sea, see: R. Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 109-131.

7 – L.B. Morton, *The Influence of the Sea upon English Poetry from the Anglo-Saxon Period to the Victorian Period*, New York, Revisionist Press, 1976, vol. 3, p. 269.

8 – A.T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *Poetics of the Elements in the Human Condition: The Sea*, Dordrecht, D. Reidel, 1985, p. xv, 507. The travails of sea journeys are described in stories worldwide; see: M. Wade Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1982, p. 30.

9 – H. S. Khalilieh, *Islamic Maritime Law*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1998.

Abbasid period, where we find descriptions of river journeys to the object of the poet's praise, or a pleasure ride by the latter on a river, as a means for rejuvenating the parts of the classical *qaṣīdah* poem which immediately follow the Introduction. However, he points out that despite these efforts at originality in the end most poets continued to borrow their imagery for describing the vessels in their poems from the camels and horses which they were used to. Part Four, devoted to the poetry of the latter Abbasid period, shows no significant change in imagery. In his Epilogue ʿAṭwān discusses al-Buḥturī's introduction of a novel theme into Arabic poetry, namely descriptions of naval battles between the Arab and Byzantine naval forces.[10]

In his *Adab al-baḥr (Literature of the Sea)* Aḥmad ʿAṭiyyah devoted eight chapters and an Introduction to the theme of the sea in literature. In his Introduction he points out that the literature of the sea has its origins in an attempt to understand it, to discover its nature and meaning, and to utilize for the good of mankind. The human exploration of the oceans and seas and the attempts to understand them were accompanied by the emergence of a literature of the sea, which ʿAṭiyyah defines as "that literature whose purpose is to give expression to the world of the sea and in which the sea is the major theme that affects the events and characters. From a perspective of literature in general [...] the literature of the sea can take the form of legend, war tale, poem, folktale, sea-journey chronicle, short story or novel. In any of these forms legendary and real personalities can appear". But ʿAṭiyyah does not view the literature of the sea from just an esthetic point of view. He also sees its compositions as historical, geographical and social documents of scientific value. In Chapter One he provides an overall survey of the Arabs' associations with the sea, with a focus on the Arabs' commercial, cultural and religious activities connected with seas and oceans. Chapter Two is devoted to the sea in pre-Islamic poetry, the earliest examples of Arabic sea literature, which proves that the Arabs were familiar with the sea before the advent of Islam. In Chapter Three ʿAṭiyyah deals with sea stories, which he considers as the precursors of the stories about the sea which appear in the *Arabian Nights*. He also discusses the role played by Arab merchants in the emergence of these stories. In Chapter Four the author goes on to study the sea stories in the *Arabian Nights* itself, and the major role which the sea plays in these stories' events and in the lives of their characters, especially Sinbad the Sailor, whose sea travels constitute a prime example of the sea stories in the *Arabian Nights*. Chapter Five is devoted to the Arab seafarer Aḥmad b. Māǧid, author of *al-Muršidāt wa ʾl-fawāǧid al-baḥriyyah (Advice and Lessons of the Sea)*. Chapter Six deals with the seafaring literature written by Arabs, whose importance lies in the fact that it constitutes a major component of Arabic sea literature as a whole. In Chapter Seven ʿAṭiyyah discusses the sea in modern Arabic literature, while Chapter Eight is devoted to a survey of sea literature in the West.[11]

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10 – Ḥusayn ʿAṭwān, *Waṣf al-baḥr wa ʾl-nahr fī ʾl-šiʿr al-ʿarabī min al-ʿaṣr al-ǧāhilī ilà ʾl-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī al-ṯānī*, Amman, Dāʾirat al-Ṭaqāfah wa ʾl-Funūn, 1975.

11 – Aḥmad Muḥammad ʿAṭiyya, *Adab al-baḥr*, Cairo, Dār al-Maʿārif, 1978.

The sea and its environment were a novel element in pre-Islamic poetry, added by the poets of the period to the desert scenes they described. The sea had an effect on both the form and the content of their poetry. Two main factors brought about the use of sea imagery in pre-Islamic poetry, one that some poets lived in the vicinity of sedentary peoples, and the other that poets also undertook sea journeys. Al-Mahdī, in his historical introduction to Arab acquaintance with sea life in pre-Islamic times, he points out that as a people of traders and merchants the Arabs had experience of the sea and knew quite a bit about it. Al-Mahdī also mentions the Qurʾānic verses in which the sea or sea-faring vessels are mentioned. After these introductory comments he goes into a detailed analysis of sea-related imagery in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Since, so he claims, this poetry constituted a registry of all aspects of Arab life in those days, he uses it to prove that the Arabs of the times were familiar with the sea. An image which readers of this poetry will often encounter is the ship as a metaphor for a woman's camel-borne sedan. The author also discusses a number of other sea-related themes containted in pre-Islamic poetry, for example sailors, maritime commerce, and the riches of the sea. Al-Mahdī points out that the riches of the sea were depicted with considerable care by pre-Islamic poets, especially pearl diving and fishing. The purpose of the article as a whole, according to the author's Introduction, is to refute the claim that the Arabs at the time in question had no contact with or knowledge of the sea. The evidence he brings comes from the Qurʾān, pre-Islamic poetry, and historical texts. He also demonstrates that when pre-Islamic poets write about the sea, it is not out of ignorance but with sure and precise knowledge.[12]

James E. Montgomery, in the fifth chapter of his *The Vagaries of the Qasidah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry*, entitled "An Arab at Sea: A Poem by Bishr b. Abi Khazim al-Asadi", points out that the appearance of sea imagery in pre-Islamic poetry is surprising, and that readers usually expect it to contain rather allusions to nomadic life in the desert. Montgomery shows, using poetic texts by Bišr b. Abī Ḫāzim (sixth century CE) and others, that not only were the Arabs in pre-Islamic times quite familiar with the sea, but also, and more importantly, that these early poets utilized the theme of seafaring for expressing feelings such as longing for one's home and family. Montgomery thus refutes Lichtenstadter's mythological interpretation,[13] according to which the evocation of seafaring vessels has its roots in obscure ancient religious allusions.[14]

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12 – Qāsim Rāḍī Mahdī, "Maẓāhir al-bīʾah fī ʾl-šiʿr al-ǧāhilī", *al-Mawrid*, 10 (1981), p. 128-140.

13 – A view which she propounded in her paper "Origin and Interpretation of Some Qur'anic Symbols", in: *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, Roma, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1956, vol. 1, p. 58-80.

14 – J.E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qasidah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry*, Gibb Literary Studies, I, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 166-208. For detail see Montgomery, *JAL*, 32 (2001), p. 84-85.

The main thrust of all the afore-mentioned studies is literary; their main focus is on the tendency towards poetic innovation which appeared in the Abbasid period, and also on sea-related themes in poetry.

The sea in the Qur'ān and its commentaries

A number of Qur'ānic verses deal with sea-related activities, as well as with tales whose events occurred mainly on the seas, such as those of Noah, Jonah, Moses, and also with the sea on the Day of Resurrection.[15] According to the Qur'ān as interpreted in its commentaries the Arabs were well-acquainted with the sea and with seafaring vessels. Below we shall see whether Šī'ite writers followed the Qur'ānic model of the sea and sea vessels in their stories of sea-related miracles performed by Šī'ite imāms.

In addition to verses in which the sea in general is mentioned, the Qur'ān also contains five chapters *(sūrahs)* which speak of two specific seas.[16] However, the Qur'ān exegetes are not all in agreement as to the seas' geographical whereabouts, although everyone agrees that one of the two is very salty and bitter while the water of the second is sweet, that God put a barrier between the two after one of them imposed itself on the other, that the two do not mix, that the taste of their waters does not change, and that the water of the sweet sea does not spoil.[17]

The Qur'ān speaks of sea journeys and of seafarers and the dangers they

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15 – Q 7:163, 10:73, 11:37-44, 18:60-79, 23:27-29, 26:64, 119-120; 29:14-15, 37:139-144, 68:48-50. See also Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Šaḥātah, Cairo, al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li-'l-Kitāb, 1988, vol. 2, p. 44, 70-71, 244, 281-283, 592-598; vol. 3, p. 155, 273, 377, 619, 620; vol. 4, p. 412; al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ğaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ğarīr, *Ğāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. Ṣidqī Ğ. al-ʿAṭṭār, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1995, vol. 9, p. 15, 338-343; vol. 16, p. 3-5; al-Suddī al-Kabīr, *Tafsīr al-Suddī al-Kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAṭā Yūsuf, al-Manṣūrah, Dār al-Wafā', 1993, p. 272, 336; ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tafsīr ʿAbd al-Razzāq*, ed. Maḥmūd M. ʿAbduh, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1999, vol. 2, p. 343-338, 462.

16 – Q 18:60, 25:53, 27:61, 35:12, 55:19.

17 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 237, 314, 554; vol. 4, p. 197; al-Ṭabarī, *Ğāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 27, p. 166-169; ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tafsīr ʿAbd al-Razzāq*, vol. 3, p. 267; al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, *Tafsīr al-Ḍaḥḥāk*, ed. Muḥammad S. A. al-Zufaytī, Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 1999, vol. 2, p. 691; Q 25:53, 27:61, 35:12, 55:19-10. Pier Giovanni Donini discusses the debate among Arab geographers concerning the identity of the two seas which God separated: "It came to be assumed quite on that the 'two bodies' were the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, separated by the Suez isthmus. As time went on, Arab geographers and mapmakers turned this explanation into a sort of dogma, forgetting that according to the Qur'an (25:53, 35:12) in one of the 'two bodies' the water is 'palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink', while in the other it is 'salt and bitter'. Bearing in mind that, in both cases, the freshwater sea is called *Furāt*, and that the word *baḥr* is commonly used in Arabic to indicate a big river as well as the sea, it was suggested that the reference in the Qur'an might be to the Euphrates river and the Persian Gulf, although there is no obvious "barrier" to stop the waters of the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab from joining the sea". See P. G. Donini, *Arab Travelers and Geographers*, London, Immel Publishing, 1991, p. 15-16.

face; these are perceived as trials brought upon mankind to test their patience and their faith in their Creator.[18] The verses and the commentaries speak of two sources of danger to which seafarers and seagoing vessels are exposed. One of these is the aggression of man against man, which is a source of iniquity on land as well as on sea. Sin on the seas is the result of man's attempts to put his hands on what God has forbidden, by attacking other ships.[19] Then there is the marine environment, which contributes to the dangers of travelers at sea. Among the dangerous elements to be found in this environment are fog, darkness, waves, high winds, and sea animals. Thus, for example, darkness can make travelers on the sea lose their way; the water can be so dark that if one puts one's hands in it it will become unseen.[20] As a result of such dangers travelers were acutely afraid of drowning at sea.[21]

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18 – H. Ringgren, "The Concept of Ṣabr in Pre-Islamic Poetry and in the Qur'an", *IC* 26 (1952), p. 75, 83-85.

19 – Al-Suddī al-Kabīr, *Tafsīr al-Suddī al-Kabīr*, p. 380; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 21, p. 58-60; Q 30:41. The two words *fasād* ("corruption") and *baḥr* ("sea") in the latter verse ("corruption has appeared on land and in the sea as an outcome of what men's hands have wrought") have given rise to numerous interpretations. The word "corruption" is has been taken to stand for any number of evils: sins, ruin, famine, drought, death, wrongful destruction, corruption in the narrow sense, and sorcery. See: Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Dāmaghānī, *al-Wuǧūh wa ʾl-naẓāʾir*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥ. Abū al-ʿAzm al-Zufaytī, Cairo, Lağnat Iḥyāʾ al-Turāṯ, 1995, vol. 2, p. 114-116. As far as the word "sea" mentioned in the verse is concerned, exegetes have understood it as referring to various specific locations, such as cities and towns, but also to the sea in the usual meaning. See al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, *Tafsīr al-Ḍaḥḥāk*, vol. 2, p. 663-664. Al-Qummī is of the opinion that "corruption on land" refers to "the extinction of animals if it does not (rain), and the death of the beasts of the sea due to the same. Al-Ṣādiq, may peace be upon him, has said: the lives of the beasts of the sea (depend) on rain, and if it does not rain then corruption appears on both land and sea; this happens whenver wrongs and sins proliferate". Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, Beirut, Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 1991, vol. 2, p. 137.

20 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 18, p. 200-201; vol. 20, p. 7; Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 565; vol. 3, p. 202; ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tafsīr ʿAbd al-Razzāq*, vol. 2, p. 444; Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Hawārī, *Tafsīr kitāb Allāh al-ʿazīz*, ed. Balḥāǧǧ b. Saʿīd Šarīfī, Beirut, Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1990, vol. 1, p.532-533; vol. 2, p. 188; vol. 3, p. 185; Q 27:63, 24:40, 10:22. The Imām Muḥammad al-Rāzī (544-604 / 1149-1207) wrote that "the darkness of land and sea is a metaphor for the frightful things which are to be found in both. In the darkness of the sea are combined the darkness of night, of the sea itself, and of the clouds, to which are added thick clouds and terrible waves". Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol. 13, p. 22-23. Muqātil b. Sulaymān relates that "the sea is darker the deeper its water [...]": *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 202.

21 – Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol. 21, p. 10-11; Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 234-235, 540-541; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 11, p. 131; vol. 15, p. 154; ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tafsīr ʿAbd al-Razzāq*, 2:305, 463; al-Saddī al-Kabīr, *Tafsīr al-Saddī al-Kabīr*, p. 395, 405; Hūd al-Hawārī, *Tafsīr kitāb Allāh al-ʿazīz*, vol. 3, p. 312; vol. 4, p. 101; Q 10:22, 17:66-67, 36:44. Al-Rāzī orders the terrors of the sea on an increasing scale, and states how each affects the travelers' mental state: "Know that if a man journeys on a ship and finds that the wind is good and fit for proceeding properly, he will be very happy. But then the signs of

For this reason men in fear of drowning call on God to save them from the terrors of the sea.[22] At the same time, the Qurʾān also points out that men use the stars for guidance and for knowing what course to take; in fact, the Creator made the stars for the express purpose of helping travelers find their way.[23]

The Qurʾān also mentions seafaring vessels, which hold an exalted position due to the fact that they are considered one of God's signs in the universe,[24] although they are made by men. The wind in this connection is mentioned in the Qurʾān in the context of God sending wind to make ships able to make headway in the sea. This is an obvious allusion to sailships, which in the absence of wind are doomed to remain in place on the water. The Qurʾān's exegetes understood these comments to mean that God himself causes these parts of the boat to move, although the parts themselves are not mentioned.[25] On the other hand, the Qurʾān compares ships to the mountains on land; perhaps it was the great size of some ships which wrought this comparison, mentioned in the following verse: "And His are the lofty ships that sail like [floating] mountains through the seas" (Q 55:24).

The Qurʾān also explains the purpose for the purchase of ships, namely to make a living by undertaking commercial sea journeys to different lands and moving goods from one land to another.[26] As a result some exegetes have ex-

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ruin will suddenly appear, the first being strong stormy winds and the second huge waves from all sides. The third is that their minds will be overcome with thoughts of imminent destructions, and the unlikelihood of their being saved. Such a sudden change from agreeable to dangerous circumstances can arouse great fear, and the sight of the sea's fearsome attributes are likely to enhance one's terror. In such a situation a man's sole wish will be to hope for God's grace and mercy, and will not wish to rely on anyone in creation". See al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol. 17, p. 70-71.

22 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 565; vol. 2, p. 234-235; vol. 3, p. 389-390, 439; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-bayān*, vol. 11, p. 131; vol. 15, p. 154; vol. 21, p. 101-102; ᶜAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanᶜānī, *Tafsīr ᶜAbd al-Razzāq*, 2:305; Hūd al-Hawārī, *Tafsīr kitāb Allāh al-ᶜazīz*, vol. 2, p. 432; vol. 3, p. 341; Q 29:65-66, 31:31-32, 10:22, 17:66-69. Al-Rāzī explains: "When all these sources of terror come together a person can only turn to God Almighty [...] When such catastrophes occur a person is driven to a number of things: one, prayer; two, supplication; three, sincere devotion [...]; and four, thankful devotion". See al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol. 13, p. 22-23.

23 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 580; vol. 2, p. 234-235; Hūd al-Hawārī, *Tafsīr kitāb Allāh al-ᶜazīz*, 1:547, 3:261; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-bayān*, vol. 7, p. 372; vol. 11, p. 131; P. G. Donini, *Arab Travelers and Geographers*, p. 15; Q 6:97, 10:22.

24 – I. Lichtenstadter, "Origin and Interpretation of Some Qur'anic Symbols", p. 70.

25 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 418, 439, 771-772; al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol. 17, p. 70-71; al-Suddī al-Kabīr, *Tafsīr al-Suddī al-Kabīr*, p. 432-433. Al-Ṭabarī relates the following tradition: "Bišr told us: Yazīd told us: Saᶜīd told us in the name of Qatādah, that He said: "And among His signs are the ships that sail like [floating] mountains through the seas" (Q 42:32), meaning that ships run with the wind, and if the wind ceases they stand in place". See al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-bayān*, vol. 25, p. 43-45; Q 30:46, 31:31-32.

26 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 136, 154, 418, 554, 836-837; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-bayān*, vol. 15, p. 153; vol. 17, p. 258; vol. 25, p. 186; al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol.

plained that just ships at sea are an abode for men, like the land, and a means for disseminating human activity on earth.[27] The Qurʾān speaks not only of the sea itself and the vessels on it, but also about the benefits it bestows. According to the Qurʾān these are two: the sea is a source of nourishment to mankind, and some of its products are fit to be used for decoration,[28] for example pearls and corals.[29]

But in conclusion we must remember that the Qurʾān, although it mentions the sea quite frequently, is not a guide to seamanship; its main purpose, after all, is to present Islam's main theological principle, the oneness of God.[30] Consequently, the sea and all it contains are perceived as having been created by God for the service of mankind. The latter will therefore worship God, who has bent the sea to the service of man and who saves man from its dangers.

As the reader will have noted, no study of the sea in Islam has treated the subject in light of the miracles attributed to the Šīᶜite imāms. This is thus the next topic to be treated here.

The miracles of Twelver Šīᶜite imāms

According to the Šīᶜite creed it is not only prophets who perform miracles, but imāms as well.[31] Al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd[32] says on this subject: "The appearance of

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21, p. 10-11; Hūd al-Hawārī, *Tafsīr kitāb Allāh al-ᶜazīz*, vol. 2, p. 431; vol., 3:329, 414, 4:137; ᶜAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanᶜānī, *Tafsīr ᶜAbd al-Razzāq*, vol. 2, p. 266; al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, *Tafsīr al-Ḍaḥḥāk*, vol. 1, p. 515; Q 14:32, 22:65, 23:22, 45:12.

27 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 542; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-bayān*, vol. 15, p. 157; Q 17:70.

28 – Al-Rāzī in his commentary explains: "'And He knows all that is on land and in the sea' (Q 6:59), since one of the compartments of the knowledge of God is all the beasts of the land and the sea. [...] And as for the sea, although the mind comprehends it less, the senses indicate that the wonders of the seas in all are more, and their extent greater, and the animals and creatures in them are more wonderous". See al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Faḫr al-Rāzī*, vol. 13, p. 11.

29 – Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 153; vol. 3, p. 439; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-bayān*, vol. 2, p. 68; ᶜAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. Furāt al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, Qumm, Muʾassasat Dār al-Kitāb, 1982³, vol. 1, p. 385.

30 – M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1999, p. 36; F. Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, Chicago, Minneapolis, 1980, p. 66, 78-79.

31 – In contradistinction to the Sunnī creed, which only recognizes miracles performed by prophets; in fact, it considers the performance of a miracle to constitute proof of prophetic powers. According to the Sunna a miracle is an act which exceeds the bounds of natural law, and which no mere mortal can perform. For more details see: J.M. McDermott, *The Theology of Al-Shaikh Al-Mufid*, Beirut, Dar al-Mashriq, 1978, p. 85. Only a true prophet can perform a miracle, and only a miracle can prove someone to be a prophet; see R. Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes, Theologien und Erschelinungsforment des islamischen Heiligenwunders*, Freiburger Islamstudien XI, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1987, p. 52-53. The purpose of the miracle *(muᶜǧizah)* is to convince others that someone is indeed a prophet, in contradistinction to a lesser wonder *(karāmah)*, which serves to enhance the position of the person to whom it was given to perform. See Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, p. 43; miracles are also important for prophets who need them to stand up to their enemies (p. 52).

miracles peformed by imāms is possible from a rational perspective, and numerous traditions and texts demonstrate corroborate them".

Among Twelver Šīᶜites the ability of imāms to perform miracles is general accepted, with the exception of the Banū Nawbaḫt[33] and the Muᶜtazilites, both of whom rejected the idea.[34]

But miracles have not been attributed solely to prophets. Some proverbial other examples were the mother of Moses and Maryam bint ᶜImrān. Moses' mother had a revelation,[35] which is a miracle in and of itself. Maryam bint ᶜImrān was sustained by God after she shook the trunk of a dry date palm,[36] also a miracle.[37] In the Sunnī view, however, what happened to Maryam is considered a lesser wonder (*karāmah* or *irhāṣ*[38]) and not an actual miracle.

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32 – An important scholar of his times, born in Iraq in 336/948 or 338/950 and died in Baghdad in 413/1022. He was a student of Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī and of a number of Muᶜtazilite scholars, and took part in the development of the science of rhetoric among Šīᶜites. Al-Šarīf al-Murtaḍā, al-Šarīf al-Raḍī and Abū Ğaᶜfar al-Ṭūsī were among his teachers. For more on him see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shiᶜism: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiᶜism*, New Haven and London, 1985, p. 317.

33 – Among the most famous members of the Banū Nawbaḫt family were Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜAlī Abū Sahl al-Nawbaḫtī and his grandson al-Ḥasan b. Mūsà Abū Aḥmad al-Nawbaḫtī, both of whom did not accept the idea that imāms were capable of performing miracles. Both did however agree that Šīᶜite imāms were infallible. For more on them see *EI²*, *s.v.* «Al-Nawbakhtī» (J. L. Kraemer), vol. 12, p. 1044. The Banū Nawbaḫt were Twelver Šīᶜites, but had only a marginal influence on the Šīᶜite creed. On the other hand, one Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Nawbaḫt composed a book entitled *al-Yāqūt fī ᶜilm al-kalām* in which he admits the possibility that an imām may be capable of performing a miracle, in which context he mentions the affair of Āṣaf b. Baraḫiyyah and Maryam bint ᶜImrān. For more details see the commentary on this book by Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf, entitled *Anwār al-malakūt fī šarḥ al-yāqūt*, ed. Muḥammad N. Zanğānī, Teheran, Šāmḫānī Dannišah, 1338/1959, p. 186. However, this is a relatively late book and does not represent the trend of which al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd speaks when referring to the Banū Nawbaḫt. For more details see Āġā Buzurk al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Ḏarīᶜah ilā taṣānīf al-šīᶜah*, Nağaf, 1936-8, vol. 2, p. 444-445; vol. 25, p. 271-272; Madelung is of the opinion that the work in question was written by Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. al-Nawbaḫt, of whose life no details are known, and that it was composed some one-hundred years after 914 CE, which is the date that ᶜAbbās Iqbāl gives for its publication. For more details see: W. Madelung, "Imamism and Muᶜtazilite Theology", in: *Le Shiᶜisme Imamite* (Colloque de Strasbourg, 1968), Paris, 1970, p. 15.

34 – Except for Ibn al-Iḫšīd (see S. Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-ᶜAllāma al-Ḥillī*, Berlin, Laus Scharz, 1991, p. 195) and also Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (see al-Mufīd, *Awāʾil al-maqālāt fī al-maḏāhib waʾl-muḫtārāt*, Tabrīz, 1951, p. 40-41; Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, p. 98; Schmidtke, *The Theology*, p. 160). Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī is Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī Ibn al-Ṭayyib, a Muᶜtazilite imām of the Basra school (d. 436/1044). For more details on him see *EIr*, "Abu ʾl Ḥoseyn Baṣrī" (D. Gimaret), vol. I, p. 322-324.

35 – See Q 28:7.

36 – Q 19:25; see also *EI²*, *s.v.* «Maryam» (A.J. Wensinck, P. Johnstone), vol. 6, p. 631.

37 – ᶜAlī b. Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, *Kašf al-murād fī šarḥ taǧrīd al-iᶜtiqād*, Beirut, 1408/1988, p. 276.

38 – The term *irhāṣ* refers to a miracle performed by a prophet before being made aware of his prophetic calling; see Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, p. 109.

Al-Ḥalabī[39] says that "a miracle performed by an imām constitutes proof of his status as imām". He adds: "Miracles are not performed only by prophets", giving as an example Solomon's trustee Āṣaf b. Barakhiyyah, who performed miracles although he was not a prophet. The miracles of the imāms, he explains, are related to their claim to the imāmate.[40]

The Šīᶜite scholar al-Ḥillī in his *Kašf al-murād fī šarḥ tağrīd al-iᶜtiqād* refutes the arguments put forth by the opponents of the Šīᶜite claim that their imāms perform miracles. He mentions the same figures mentioned above, who were not prophets and yet had miracles ascribed to them. He also adds that in his opinion what uniquely characterizes the prophets is not the fact that they perform miracles but rather their prophetic calling, which accompanies their miracles.[41] A non-prophet may thus be able to perform a miracle just like a prophet, but this does not of course mean that such a person is also like a prophet in other respects.[42]

The Sunnī view is that miracles constitute proof of prophetic powers, and that anyone who performs a miracle is perforce a prophet. According to the Shīᶜīites the imāms are not prophets; they do not cast doubt on the Prophet Muḥammad's status as the Seal of the Prophets.[43] They add, however, that the performance of miracles is not limited to prophets alone. Rather, miracles can also be performed by imāms because a miracle does not constitute evidence for prophetic ability, but for any true claim. Consequently, miracles performed by the imāms constitute proof of their imāmate, without this fact detracting in any way from the superior status of the prophets.

To denote the extraordinary deeds of their imāms the Šīᶜites use the term "miracle" *(muᶜğizah)*, and not the term for a lesser wonder, *karāmah*. The latter word isused only rarely by Šīᶜite writers when they discuss miracles.[44] In fact, the Šīᶜites miss no opportunity to compare the prophets and the imāms in this respect.

The Sunnī distinction between *muᶜğizah* and *karāmah* is rejected by the Šīᶜites. According to the Sunnī belief whatever miraculous deeds are performed by imāms should be considered *karāmah*s, while the Šīᶜites insist that they are *muᶜğizah*s in the full sense of the word, i.e. full miracles performed in public, not hidden from view as are *karāmah*s.[45]

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39 – Abū Ṣāliḥ Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī died in Aleppo in 447/1055-6. He studied with al-Šarīf al-Murtaḍā and Abū Ğaᶜfar al-Ṭūsī. See al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Ḏarīᶜah*, vol. 17, p. 247.

40 – Abū Ğaᶜfar M. b. Yaᶜqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, Teheran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1946[4], p. 100.

41 – Al-Ḥillī, *Kašf al-murād*, p. 276, taken from Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, p. 109-110.

42 – Ibid., p. 277, taken from Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, p. 110.

43 – M.M. Bar Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shīᶜism*, Leiden and Jerusalem, 1999, p. 140-141.

44 – Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide*, p. 91.

45 – Although there is some inter-Šīᶜite debate on whether the imāms' miracles should be

How imāms conjure the sea

According to the traditions on which the present study is based, the evocation of the sea by an imām is accompanied by the act of striking the ground with the leg. Striking the ground with the leg as a preparatory act prior to the performance of a miracle was not an innovation of the imāms, nor were they the only ones to have done so. For example, the angel Gabriel is reported to have struck the ground on a number of occasions, one of which caused five rivers to burst out of the earth, the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Nile, the Mihrān and the Balkh.[46]

On another occasion on which Gabriel struck the ground with his foot he caused water to come out for Joseph.[47] The angel also struck the ground with his foot when he revealed himself to the Prophet Muḥammad for the first time; then, too, a spring appeared and the two of them used the water for ritual ablutions.[48]

The following prophets are reported to have struck the ground with their feet in preparation for the performance of a miracle: Job after he had been stricken with thirst was told by God in a revelation: "Strike (the ground) with your foot",[49] whereupon water sprung out of the ground before him;[50] David[51] struck the ground with his foot, whereupon the sea split and the whales were revealed;[52] Ishmael[53] as a child in the company of his father Abraham[54] in Mecca was thirsty, whereupon he struck the ground with his foot and the Zam-

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made public, in view of the Šīᶜite policy of "dissimulation" *(taqiyyah)*.

46 – For more details see al-Ṣadūq, Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh, *al-Ḫiṣāl*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1982, vol. 1, p. 291, no. 54; idem, *Man lā yaḥḍiruhu al-faqīh*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1993³, vol. 2, p. 45, no. 2663; ᶜAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, *Fiqh al-Riḍā*, Mashhad, al-Muᵓtamar al-ᶜālamī li-ᵓl-imām al-Riḍā, 1985, p. 293, no. 49; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 409, no. 8; al-Ḥurr al-ᶜĀmilī, *Wasāᵓil al-šīᶜah*, vol. 9, p. 530, no. 12642.

47 – Muḥammad b. Masᶜūd al-ᶜAyyāšī, *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāšī*, ed. Hāšim al-Maḥallātī, Teheran, al-Maṭbaᶜah al-ᶜIlmiyyah, 1960, vol. 1, p. 177, no. 27; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Beirut, Muᵓassasat al-Wafāᵓ, 1984, vol. 12, p. 302-303, no. 103.

48 – Raḍī al-Dīn ᶜAlī b. Mūsà b. Ṭāwūs, *Saᶜd al-suᶜūd*, Qumm, Dār al-Ḏaḫāᵓir, 1949, p. 215; Q 38:42.

49 – Q 38:42.

50 – Niᶜmat Allāh al-Ǧazāᵓirī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāᵓ*, Qumm, Āyat Allāh al-Marᶜašī al-Naǧafī, 1983, p. 198, 200, 206-207; ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Hibat Allāh Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Šarḥ nahǧ al-balāġah*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, Dār Iḥyāᵓ al-Kutub al-ᶜArabiyyah, 1967, vol. 19, p. 133; al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 2, p. 241; al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Iršād al-qulūb*, Qumm, Dār al-Šarīf al-Raḍī, 1991, vol. 1, p. 128 (commentary on the verse: "Strike [the ground] with thy foot: here is cool water to wash with and to drink").

51 – For details on him see R. Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qurᵓān and Muslim Literature*, London, Curzon Press, 2002, p.35-38.

52 – Rašīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Šahrāšūb al-Māzandarānī, *Mutašābih al-Qurᵓān*, Teheran, Dār Baydār li-ᵓl-Našr, 1949, vol. 1, p. 58.

53 – For details see *EI²*, *s.v.* «Ismāᶜīl» (R. Paret), vol. 4, 1990, p. 184-185.

54 – For details see *EI²*, *s.v.* «Ibrāhīm» (R. Paret), vol. 2, 1986, p. 431-432.

zam spring burst forth.[55]

This was not the only means used by imāms to evoke the sea. It is related, for example, that an imām would draw a bandage across the eye or eyes of those present. Then he would call and the miracle would happen. At other times the imām would stroke the eye of the present person, who would then immediately be presented with a vision of the sea.

Such well-known acts were associated with the imāms' piercing vision;[56] according to Šīᶜite belief an imām can see beyond the natural world and perceive things which are hidden to ordinary mortals, whenther they be in the sky, on the earth, in Heaven or in Hell. These characteristics tend to convince doubters to recognize the imām's right to his post, and the truth of the Šīᶜite creed.

A number of Šīᶜite imāms are reported to have struck the ground with their leg before performing a miracle. Thus, for example, ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib did so on a number of occasions. Once a spring of water burst forth after he struck the ground with his leg, and he and his companions performed the ritual ablutions and prayed.[57] Another time he struck the ground with his foot and a pulpit made of rubies came out of the earth, whereupon he ascended it and gave a sermon. Yet another time he caused the earth to quake by striking the ground with his foot.[58] Once he also stopped an earthquake by striking the ground with his foot. He is also said to have resurrected a dead person by striking the ground with his foot.

Of the imām al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī (d. 661 CE) it is related that when in al-Madīnah he once struck his tend with his foot, whereupon he was immediately transported to al-Kūfah.[59]

Of the imām Ǧaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE) it is said that he struck the ground with his foot a number of times. One of these occasions was when he wanted to show the pool of Paradise to Ibn Sinān;[60] another time he struck the ground with his foot and out came gold in the shape of a camel's neck;[61] on a third oc-

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55 – Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 202, no. 2; al-Ǧazāᵓirī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāᵓ*, p. 110, no. 107; al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 12, p. 106, no. 19; al-Ṣadūq (Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawyh al-Qummī), *ᶜIlal al-šarāǧiᶜ*, Qumm, Maktabat al-Dāwirī, n.d., vol. 2, p. 432, no. 1; Quṭb al-Dīn Saᶜīd b. Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī, *al-Ḫarāᵓiǧ wa-ᵓl-ǧarāᵓiḥ*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1988, vol. 2, p. 928.

56 – For details on this topic see: E. Kohlberg, "Vision and the Imams", p. 125-157.

57 – Abū Ǧaᶜfar al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, Qumm, Dār al-Ṭaqāfah li-ᵓl-Našr, 1994, p. 200, no. 340-43; Rašīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Šahrāšūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat al-ᶜAllāmah li-ᵓl-Našr, 1960, vol. 2, p. 324, 337; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Saᶜd al-suᶜūd*, p. 113.

58 – Šaraf al-Dīn ᶜAlī al-Ḥusaynī al-Astarābādī, *Taᵓwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhirah fī faḍl al-ᶜitrah al-ṭāhirah*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1988, p. 805-806, whence al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 25, p. 379, no. 30.

59 – Abū Ǧaᶜfar Muḥammad b. Ǧarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāᵓil al-imāmah*, Naǧaf, al-Maṭbaᶜah al-Ḥaydariyyah, 1963, p. 65.

60 – Al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 25, p. 381, no. 35.

61 – Al-Mufīd, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Nuᶜmān al-ᶜUkbarī, *al-Iḫtiṣāṣ*, ed. ᶜAlī Akbar

casion he struck a dead woman with his foot and brought her to life;[62] and yet another time he struck the trunk of a dessicated date palm, whereupon it revived and yielded thrity-two different kinds of fresh dates.[63]

The imām's miracle boat

According to Šīᶜite belief, when an imām felt that his authority was questioned he would perform a miracle in order to convince the doubters. He would evoke a boat which he would ride together with the doubters. On this miracle boat ride there were no worldly boundaries. Not only the imām himself would be free of the shackles which usually bind mortals to this earth, but he was able to free his companions, too, of their human limitations. On this boatride he would anchor in Paradise, on the shores of islands where domes and tents awaited the imāms.

Šīᶜite sources relate that the imām's boat had no captain; it set off immediately at the imām's command: "Go forth with God's blessing", and sailed between mountains of sapphire. It knew what course to take without having to be directed by its passengers. It's speed was very great, and no obstacle could stand in its way. Its passengers felt no insecurity or fear, and the sea was always calm throughout the journey. The boat would arrive in Paradise in the blink of an eye. The moment the boat set off material time came to a stop and a sacred time began, a time not of this world. When the imām arrived the face of history changed. He was not a mortal denizen of the earth but a cosmic, unbounded being, whom the boat obeyed. He moved freely outside the bounds of this world and granted the same freedom of movement also to his fellow travelers. The imām would arrive with his companions in Paradise, where they would be met by the spirits of the Prophet Muḥammad, his dauther Fāṭimah, and the other imāms, who would be resurrected for a moment in order to welcome the visiting imām. The gates of Paradise would be open and strange unreal shapes would be seen through them, such as the domes in which the imāms resided in Heaven.[64]

Not only is the imām superior to the rest of mankind, his boat, too, is of a superior kind. It is made of silver and rubies, with a white pearl in the middle, a befits a vessel in the service of an imām who miraculously brought it forth and sailed the sea on it with his companions. The boat flies a green flag on which the following words are written: "There is no God but Allāh, Muḥammad is the

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al-Ġaffārī, Qumm, The teaching staff at the *ḥawzah* of Qumm, 1992, p. 272; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrūḫ al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-daraǧāt*, ed. Mīrzā Muḥsin Kūtchebāghī al-Tabrīzī, Qumm, Maktabat āyat Allāh al-Marᶜašī, 1983², p. 376, no. 5; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-aʾimmah*, p. 100.

62 – Al-Rāwandī, *al-Ḫarāʾiǧ wa ʾl-ǧarāʾiḥ*, vol. 1, p. 294; al-Nabbāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, vol. 2, p. 185, no. 1; ᶜAlī b. ᶜĪsà al-Irbillī, *Kašf al-ġummah fī maᶜrifat al-aʾimmah*, ed. Hāšim al-Rasūlī, Tabriz, Maktabat Banī Hāšmī, 1961, vol. 2, p. 199; ᶜAlī b. Mūsà b. Ǧaᶜfar b. Muḥammad b. Ṭāwūs, *Faraǧ al-mahmūm fī tāriḫ ᶜulamāʾ al-nuǧūm*, Qumm, Dār al-Ḏaḫāʾir, 1948, p. 230.

63 – Ibn Šahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 4, p. 214.

64 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah*, p. 142.

Messenger of Allāh, the 'the resurrected one' will kill the enemies". Šīᶜite authors may have taken the flag's green color from the green color worn by the inhabitants of Paradise and the council of believers there,[65] or perhaps because this color symbolizes fertility and life's continuation.[66] The inscription on the flag has a distinctly Šīᶜite flavor. In addition to the declaration about God's oneness it contains a reference to the second coming of the twelfth imām, Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī, whose occultation took place in the year 878 CE. He is called "*al-qāǧim*" or "the resurrected one"; his second coming to take revenge on the enemies of Shīᶜism is an article of Šīᶜite faith. The boat which the imām has so miraculously summoned proves to Šīᶜite believers that the Mahdī ("the rightfully guided one") will indeed return.

The story as a whole is clearly intended to stress the legitimcacy of the Šīᶜite creed and especially the idea of the Mahdī's return.

The imām's boat and the Prophet's mount al-Burāq

The miracle performed by the imām, of evoking the boat and traveling to Heaven, has some rather striking similarities to the story of al-Burāq,[67] the beast which the Prophet rode on his midnight journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. Šīᶜite writers clearly adopted features of the Prophet's mount when depicting the imām's boat: both have remarkable forms, perform remarkably, convey their respective passengers very rapidly, come to their destinations in no time, and are covered with gems and pearls. Al-Burāq was the speedy mount which conveyed the Prophet Moḥammad, and all the other prophets before him,[68] while the boat conveyed the imāms speedily from earth to Heaven.

It appears that Šīᶜite writers were influenced by the reports concerning al-Burāq as the speedy mount of the prophets, and thus invented a similar means of transport for their imāms. Th e choice of a boat goes to show that God provided the imāms with transport to Heaven comparable to that which he gave the prophets.

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65 – Q 55:54, 76:21, 18:31.

66 – Muḥammad Qarāniyā, "Ẓāhirat al-lawn fī ʾl-Qurʾān al-karīm", *al-Turāṯ al-ᶜarabī*, 70 (1988), URL: www.awu-dam.org/trath/70/turath70-08.htm

67 – For details on al-Burāq see *EI²*, *s.v.* «Burāḳ» (B. Carra de Vaux - R. Paret), vol. 1, 1986, p. 1310-1311; ᶜImād al-Dīn Ismāᶜīl Ibn Kaṯīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, Cairo, Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ᶜArabiyyah, n.d., vol. 3, p. 11. Al-Burāq possesses a rich metaphorical imagery. Its name is derived from an Arabic root indicating light, brilliance and lightning, perhaps in an allusion to its great speed. In the stories of the Prophet's midnight journey it is described as a strange mixture of features, as an animal with a human face covered by gems and pearls, and as a carved sculpture. See: J.E. Bencheikh, *Le Voyage nocturne de Mahomet*, Paris, Impr. nationale, 1988, p. 253.

68 – According to tradition all the prophets, beginning with Adam, rode al-Burāq, including Abraham on his journey from Damascus to Mecca, when he discovered the site of the "ancient house" for the first time. For more details see, for example, Ibn Kaṯīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, vol. 3, p. 11.

The boat's passengers

In most accounts the imām is accompanied by four other passengers[69] on his boat journey, on the orders of the imām ʿAlī. They sit on golden chairs made for them expressly and bear witness to the miracle performed by the imām, to dispel doubts as to the imām's abilities, expressed by them or others. After the journey the passengers disseminate the news of the miracle. The passengers are mentioned by name, apparently out of a desire to increase the story's credibility among the believers.

The imām's arrival in Paradise

When the imām's boat arrives in Paradise the imām ceases to be a historical personality. He becomes a cosmic being with no limits. His passengers are terrified when at sea and fear that they will drown, but the boat submits to his orders.

The imām's maritime journey lays the ground for his journey in Paradise, where he is presented to the imāms who have already passed away and gone to Heaven. The dwellers of Paradise recognize his position as imām. His fellow imāms greet him; he becomes master of the future and conqueror of the past. He is also shown the tent where he will dwell after his death.

The function of the imām's sea journey is not just a preparation for the journey to Paradise; it also serves to made death palatable to his mortal companions, by making them overcome their fears. All the events during the journey take place outside of material time. As soon as the imām arrives in Paradise sacred time begins and all contact with the material world is cut off. This miraculous journey constitutes proof of the imām's powers since, so the believers maintain, he easily travels to Paradise and shows his companions the place in Heaven where the imāms dwell, on the most beautiful islands there.

The sea's features in the imāms' miracles

Šīʿite writers do not provide elaborate details of the sea which the imām evokes and which he traverses on his way to Paradise. At most it is described only briefly. This is no doubt due to the fact that the significance of the sea is purely religious and theological, and its technical characteristics are unimportant. After all, the imām's sole objective is to reach Heaven and the imāms' island as quickly as possible, in order to put his doubters' objections to rest.

At any rate, the sea in question is calm, and those sailing on it are not exposed to any danger. Nor does it have other features of natural seas, such as waves, tides, the need to row through the water, etc.

The color of the water is white; whiter, in fact, than milk, and sweeter than honey.[70] The sea in these tales of miracles serves as a background for the events;

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69 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah,* p.142.

70 – Šīʿite writers may have chosen to borrow features of the Kawṯar river of Paradise in their depictions of the sea; that river is said to be whiter than milk. See Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, Qumm, Dār al-Šarīf al-Raḍī, 1966, vol. 2, p. 501; al-Ṣadūq, *Faḍāʾil al-*

it is both real and legendary at one-and-the-same time, as it begins in this world and ends in Paradise. The sea's depiction, too, consists of realistic and fantastic features; among the realistic features are the floating boat, the shores, the islands, the embarkation, and more; among the fantastic features we may cound the fact that the sea connects the earth with Paradise, the boat which runs on the imām's orders, and the journey which takes no time.

The riches of the sea

The imām controls the riches of the sea, its fish and its hidden treasures. He knows precisely where to find them and can summon them whenever he likes. He is all-seeing; his total vision, a gift from God, enables him to see things that are hidden from the eyes of mere mortals. He is said to cause the following treasures to appear:

A. *Pearls, rubies, musk and ambergris*

On his sea journey to Paradise the imām al-Ṣādiq is reported to have stretched his arm to the bottom of the sea, taken out pearls and rubies, and addressed one of his companions, Dāwūd b. Kaṯīr al-Raqqī as follows: "If you want this world then take these pearls and rubies". Dāwūd replied that he had no desire for this world, whereupon the imām cast them back into the sea.[71]

On the same occasion the imām stretched his hand to the bottom of the sea again, and this time brought out a handful of sand which turned into musk and ambergris in his hand. He smelled them and let his companions smell them, too, and then cast them back into the sea.[72]

B. *Fish in sea-related miracles performed by the imāms*

On a number of occasions imāms are said to have raised fish as part of a miracle. The imām al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī[73] (d. 669 CE) is said to have performed the following miracle in the presence of a man called Ǧābir.[74] He struck the ground with his foot and summoned seas on which ships voyaged. He took some fish out of the sea and gave them to Ǧābir. Ǧābir and his son carried away the fish, which were numerous, and he and his family ate of them for three days.

In this miracle the species of fish is not specified. At any rate, the description of the sea is realistic, with vessels and fish. The purpose of the miracle is to dem-

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Šīʿah, Teheran, Dār al-Aʿlamī li-ʾl-Našr, n.d., p. 36-37, no. 36; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḫālid al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsin*, Qumm, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1951[2], vol. 1, p. 180, no. 172; ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī, *al-Yāqīn*, Qumm, Muʾassasat Dār al-Kitāb, 1413 AH, p. 291; al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p.16; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah*, p. 141.

71 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah*, p. 141.

72 – Ibid.

73 – The second imām, after ʿAlī. For more details see *EI*[2], *s.v.* «al-Ḥasan b. Alī b. Abī Ṭālib» (L. Veccia Vaglieri), vol. 3, 1986, p. 607-615.

74 – I have been unable to discover the identity of this person, since only his first name is mentioned.

onstrate the imām's supernatural abilities.

C. *Nūn the whale*

In a reported dialogue between the imām ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn[75] (d. 713 CE) and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb (d. 692) the latter is said to have addressed the imām as follows: "You claim that Yūnus (Jonah) b. Mannā[76] was asked to accept the your father's [i.e., ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib] right of succession *(wilāyah)* and he refused, whereupon he was imprisoned in the belly of a whale". The imām perceived ʿAbd Allāh's incredulity and therefore asked Muḥammad b. Ṯābit[77] to blindfold himself and ʿAbd Allāh. After this was done ʿAlī uttered a call and then asked those present to remove their blindfolds. They discovered that they were sitting on a rug at the sea shore. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn then spoke, and was answered by a number of whales. One of the whales was very large, and the imām asked it for its name. It answered: "My name is Nūn". ʿAlī asked the whale why Yūnus had been imprisoned in its belly and it answered: "He was told to accept your father's right of succession but refused, and therefore he was imprisoned in my belly. But after he conceded and accepted it, I was given an order [by God] and emitted him".

In this miracle the fish is a huge whale named Nūn, which speaks to the imām. This is not unusual in Šīʿite lore: the imām is considered able to speak the language of all creatures.[78] In addition, the whale obeys the imām, appears on his call and answers his questions.

From the Šīʿite perspective, the truth of this tale would constitute proof of the antiquity of the Šīʿite belief in the authority of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. Indeed, it demonstrates, in the Šīʿite view, that the roots of Shīʿism go back many thousands of years,[79] at least since the days of Yūnus who, had he not relented and

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75 – The fourth imām in Twelver Shīʿism. For details see *EI*², *s.v.* ««Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn» (E. Kohlberg), vol. 11, 2002, p. 481-483.

76 – For details see *EI*², *s.v.* «Yūnus» (B. Heller-[A.Rippin]), vol. 9, 2002, p. 347-349.

77 – A number of known figures have this name, and it is impossible to determine to which of these the present mention refers. Among them are the following: Muḥammad b. Ṯābit b. Qays al-Šammāš (see Abū Ǧaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Riǧāl al-šayḫ al-Ṭūsī*, Qumm, Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1994, p. 82, no. 820-24); Muḥammad b. Ṯābit b. Abī Saʿd (see Aḥmad b. Abī ʿAbd Allāh al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-riǧāl*, Teheran, Teheran University Press, 1963, p. 20; Muḥammad b. Ṯābit b. Aslam (see *Riǧāl al-Ṭūsī*, p. 279, no. 4028-53); and Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥamzah Ṯābit b. Abī Ṣafiyyah al-Ṯumālī (see *Riǧāl al-Naǧāšī*, p. 358, no. 969).

78 – For more on imāms' knowledge of the language of the beasts see, for example J. Loebenstein, "Miracles in Šīʿī Thought: A Case-Study of the Miracles Attributed to Imām Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq", *Arabica* 52 (2003), p. 218. For tales in which the imāms demonstrate their ability to speak with beasts see, for example al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-daraǧāt*, p. 449, no. 8, whence al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār,* vol. 47, p. 86-87, no. 84-86; p. 99-100, no. 1; Ibn Šahrāšūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 364; al-Rāwandī, *al-Ḫarāʾiǧ wa ʾl-ǧarāʾiḥ*, vol. 1, p. 299, part of no. 5; vol. 2, p. 616, no. 15; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-daraǧāt*, 344, no. 15, 345, no. 20; Amir Moezzi, *The Divine Guide*, p. 93.

79 – For more on this subject see: E. Kohlberg, "Some Shīʿī Views on Antediluvian World",

recognized ᶜAlī's right of succession, would have remained inside the whale's belly until the Day of Judgment.

This tradition demonstrates the importance of the creed of the Prophet's descendants' right of succession *(wilāyah)* in the Šīᶜite faith; the Qurᵓānic tale of Jonah and the whale is here given a new interpretation, in accordance with the Šīᶜite belief that ᶜAlī and his descendants are the rightful leaders of the Muslim community.[80]

The imāms' domed houses on the rivershore in Paradise

After its lightning journey the imām's boat docks on the shore of a great island, on which domed houses have been built for the Šīᶜite imāms[81] (those who have already died as well as those who have yet to come to Paradise). Fāṭimah's[82]

SI, 52 (1980), p. 41-66.

80 – A number of tales are current among Šīᶜites concerning pre-Islamic individuals and groups who were punished for their refusal to recognize ᶜAlī's right of succession. Thus, for example, Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden is explain as the result of his refusal to accept the Prophet's family's right of succession. For details see:al-ᶜAyyāšī, *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāšī*, vol. 1, p. 41, no. 27. A strange tale relates that some people of Children of Israel were transformed into fish, lizards and mice because they had refused to recognized ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's right of succession (ibid., vol. 2, p. 35, no. 96). According to yet another tradition they were transformed into monkeys and pigs. For details see al Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 1, p. 244. For the same reason a number of prophets, among them Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David and Jacob, were punished as well. For details see Meir Bar-Asher, "Banū Isrāᵓīl ka-anmāṭ awwaliyyah li-ᵓl-shīᶜa", *al-Karmal*, Haifa University, 18-19 (1997-8), p. 58-59, footnote no. 30.

81 – The reason why Šīᶜite writers described the imāms' heavenly abodes as domed houses was quite likely because domes frequently crown sacred structures here on earth, including most mosques, even to this day. In Heaven, however, domes of various kinds are ubiquitous. There are domes for prophets, for imāms, for Fāṭimah, and for penitents. Thus, for example, penitents have domes in cities of light (see al-Mīrzā Ḥasan al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāᵓil*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāᵓ al-Turāṭ, 1988, vol. 12, p. 104, no. 13639-3; Tāǧ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Šaᶜīrī, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-aḫbār*, Qumm, Dār al-Riḍā li-ᵓl-Našr, 1984², p. 156-157. The domes in Heaven also come in a variety of colors and materials. Red, white and green domes are mentioned. Materials include rubies, pearls, musk, saffron and light. Thus, for example, ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's domed house is white and made of pearls, while the Prophet's is red and made of rubies. Abrahams' is green and stands to the left of God's throne. The Prophet is reported as saying that on his journey to Heaven he saw domes made of red rubies and white pearls. For details see: al-Astarābādī, *Taᵓwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhirah*, p. 434; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāᵓil al-imāmah*, p. 255; Ḥasan Abū al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Aᶜlām al-dīn fī ṣifat al-muᵓminīn*, Qumma, Muᵓassasat āl al-Bayt, 1987, p. 459; ᶜAlī b. Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī, *al-Yaqīn bi-ᵓ ḫtiṣāṣ Mawlanā ᶜAlī bi-ᵓ imrat al-muᵓminīn*, Qumm, Muᵓassasat Dār al-Kitāb, 1992, p. 291; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāᶜiẓīn*, vol. 2, p. 501; al-Ṣadūq, *Faḍāᵓil al-šīᶜah*, p. 37, no. 36.

82 – Fāṭimah's domed house is described at length in Šīᶜite sources. The imām al-Ṣādiq, when asked about the reason for Fāṭima's epithet "al-Zahrāᵓ" ("the radiant one"), said: "Because in Paradise she has a red ruby dome whose height is the equal of a year's journey, hanging in the air by God's might, with no supports underneath; it has one-hundred-thousand doors and a thousand angels at each door, which can be seen by all the denizens of Heaven, just as mortals can see the pearly, shining stars in the sky. Therefore the denizens of Heaven say: 'This is the

dome is next to the Prophet Muḥammad's. The domes of the other prophets are all located in the most beautiful spots in Paradise. The domes are said to be made of white pearls. In each there is a bed, also made of white pearls, with a cover of silk brocade. The floor is covered with saffron and crumbs of musk and ambergris.[83] The dome is covered with purple drapes, surrounded by angels and decorated with golden chains. It is surrounded by trees. The Qurʾānic "verse of the chair"[84] is written on the entrance to each dome. Inside each dome there is a black-eyed girl.[85] ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's dome stands in the middle; it is made of white pearls[86] and is larger than all the other imāms' domes.[87]

The domed houses which are occupied by imāms are covered by a drape, while those that are as yet unoccupied are not; among the latter is the domed house of the twelfth imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, which is taller than all the others.[88]

When the imām al-Ṣādiq arrives with his companions at the island of the imāms' domes he asks them to disembark and greet the imāms in their domes.[89] They thus begin a visit of inspection. They start with ʿAlī's dome, raise the drape over the entrance, see ʿAlī sitting inside and greet him. After that they continue on to the domes of the other imāms, in order, beginning with al-ġasan b. ʿAlī, then on to al-Ḥusayn, and so on until they reach Muḥammad al-Bāqir. After they greet all the imāms there, the imām al-Ṣādiq asks his companions to look to the right side of the island, where they see domes without drapes, one of which will become the abode of al-Ṣādiq himself after his death. The dome of the twelfth imām stands in the middle of these. After this al-Ṣādiq and his companions return to the boat. The imām then addresses the boat as follows: "Be with God's power", and the party immediately finds itself back on earth, as they were before their journey.[90]

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radiant one' [i.e., Fāṭimah's radiant dome]". For more details see: Ibn Šahrāšūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 331.

83 – Al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 47, p. 159, quoting *ʿUyūn al-muʿğizāt*.

84 – Q 2:255.

85 – The houris of Paradise would also seem to dwell in domed houses, whether with the imāms or in separate domes. Of the Prophet it is related that when he was taken on his night visit to Heaven he passed by a river whose banks were covered with coral domes. From the domes a call went up: "Peace be upon you, Messenger of God". The angel Gabrial asked: "Who are these?" and he answered: "These are black-eyed maidens. Ask their God to let them greet you". For more details see: al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 107.

86 – Ibn Šahrāšūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 330, 334.

87 – Al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 47, p. 160, no. 227.

88 – There is a tradition that when the Twelfth imām will return to earth at the end of time, seven domes of light will descend on Kūfa, in one of which will be the imām, but no one will know in which. For details see: al-ʿAyyāšī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāšī*, vol. 1, p. 103, nos. 301, 303.

89 – Ibn Šahrāšūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 334. According to some sources it is the imāms inside the domes who take the initiative and come out to greet and meet al-Ṣādiq and his companions, instead of the other way around. For details see: al-Nabāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, vol. 2, p. 133.

90 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah*, p. 142.

The depiction of Paradise in the account of this miraculous journey has clear connections to the Qurʾānic model, although the Šīᶜite writers also weaved in numerous details that were derived from their own imaginations and hopes, as well as some that were certainly borrowed from folk legends, although the sanctity attached to the events themselves and to the imāms had the effect of distancing the story from such origins. Yet we can say with a great degree of confidence that Paradise as depicted by the Šīᶜite writers here allowed them to in a way to gratify their concealed desires and repressed liberties; in other words, it is a compensatory construction, which also provides an imaginary answer to some questions about the afterlife. The purpose of traditions of this kind is to inculcate the idea of the imamate and to convince the Šīᶜite believers that the imāms of the past are not dead but rather reside in the most beautiful parts of Paradise, in domed palaces built expressly for them. They are alive in Heaven, like the prophets, and imāms who are special in some way, for example the first imām, ᶜAlī, or the last one, al-Mahdī, have abodes which reflect their status, larger in the case of the former, and taller in the case of the latter.

Dwellers of the sea and the seashore in the imāms' miracles

In the tales of miracles perfomed by the imāms on the sea the inhabitants of the sea and the seashore are of two kinds:

A. The imāms: in these stories the imāms live on the shore of a white sea, in domed houses built expressly for them.

B. The enemies of Shīᶜism, who are tormented in Hell.

In some of the tales the imāms are said to evoke a black sea, under which their enemies reside. Thus, for example, it is told that Dāwūd b. Kaṯīr al-Raqqī[91] asked the imām al-Ṣādiq about the fate of the enemies of Shīᶜīsm, whereupon the imām struck the ground with his cane, causing the earth to split. A black sea appeared, and in it were people with black faces and blue eyes. Every one of these people was chained to a rock and entrusted to the keeping of an angel. They all screamed and begged the Prophet Muḥammad to intercede on their

91 – A client of the Banū Asad, with epithets "Abū Ḫālid" and "Abū Sulaymān". He transmitted reports on the imāms Ǧaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq, Mūsà al-Kāẓim and ᶜAlī al-Riḍā, and is the author of two books, *al-Mazār* and *al-Ihlīlaǧah*. He died after the year 200 AH, not long after the death of the imām al-Riḍā (d. 818 CE). For more details on him see Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī b. Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-riǧāl*, Teheran, Teheran University Press, 1963, p. 146, no. 584, 452, no. 173; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ġaḍāʾirī, *Riǧāl Ibn al-Ġaḍāʾirī*, Qumm, Muʾassasat Ismāᶜīlyān, 1944², vol. 2, p. 290; Aḥmad b. Abī ᶜAbd Allāh al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-Riǧāl*, Teheran, Teheran University Press, 1963, vol. 32, p. 47-48; Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī al-Naǧāšī, *Riǧāl al- Naǧāšī*, ed. Muḥammad Ǧawād al-Nāǧīnī, Qumm, Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1986, p. 156, no. 410; al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Riǧāl al-ᶜallāma al-Ḥillī*, Qumm, Dār al-Ḏaḫāʾir, 1963, p. 67, no. 1; Muḥammad b. ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Kiššī, *Iḫtiyār maᶜrifat al-riǧāl*, also known as *Riǧāl al-Kiššī*, ed. Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī, Mašhad:, Mashhad University Press, 1929, p. 402, nos. 750-407, 751-408, 765-766; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Riǧāl al-šayḫ al-Ṭūsī*, Teheran, Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1944.

behalf, but the angels beat their faces and said to them: "You lie, you have no Muḥammad".

Dāwūd was amazed at the scene and asked the imām who these people were. Al-Ṣādiq answered: These are Ibn al-Ğamal,[92] Zufar,[93] Naʿṯal[94] and "the accursed one".[95] He then added: "They will remain covered until the Day of Resurrection".[96]

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92 – Literally "son of the camel", a Šīʿite epithet for the Caliph Abū Bakr (ruled 632-634 CE).

93 – A derisive Šīʿite epithet for the Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb (d. 644). The Šīʿite explanation of the name is as follows: One whose good is unwanted and whose evil is not to be feared, one whose arrows are not resolute and who has no abode on the two earths, one who has no prestige and who is driven by carelessness (see al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 3, p. 167, no. 23). The word "*zufar*" also means the first neigh of a donkey, and the sound of a fire being kindled. Thus the name may perhaps indicate a desire by the Šīʿites to compare ʿUmar's voice to that of a donkey, or to hint at his fated end in the fires of hell. For details see al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 54, p. 100.

94 – A derisive Šīʿite epithet for the Caliph ʿUṯmān b. ʿAffān (d. 656 CE). The name's origin is the subject of some debate. Here are some of the opinions on the matter: A. That it was the name of a young donkey belonging to a Jew in al-Madīnah. B. That it referred to an Egyptian (or a man from Khurasān) with a large beard. C. That it denoted a long-haired male hyena. D. That it meant a large, long-bearded billy goat. E. That the name was taken from that of a Yemeni Jew by the same name, who was also known by his epithet of Abū ʿUmāra. This man came to the Prophet and asked him about the attributes of God, the prophets and the imāms. The answers he received convinced him to convert to Islam, and on the occasion of his conversion he composed a nine-line poem which began thus: "The Exalted and Sublime one prayed for you, oh best of all mankind". For more on Naʿṯal the Jew, see ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḫazzāz al-Qummī, *Kifāyat al-aṯar fī ʾl-naṣṣ ʿalà al-aʾimmah al-iṯnay ʿašar*, Qumm, Dār Baydār li-ʾl-Našr, 1980, p. 11-16; al-Irbillī, *Kašf al-ġummah*, vol. 1, p. 479. In fact, it is quite unlikely that the Caliph's epithet originated with Naṯʿal the Jew, since the latter was a virtuous person who embraced Islam out of conviction, whereas the Šīʿites clearly intended their epithets for the Caliphs to bear pejorative connotations. Thus one or more of the first four meanings probably gave rise to the name. For details see: al-Nabāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, vol. 3, p. 30.

95 – "The accursed one" is a pejorative Šīʿite epithet which can stand for a number of different people to whom Shīʿism is hostile because of some wrong it committed. We do not know which of these is intended here. Below are some of the figures called "the accursed one" in the Shīʿte literature: the devil; Abū Lahab (ʿAbd al-ʿUzzà b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib) (d. 624 CE) (for details see Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bakrī, *al-Anwār fī mawlid al-nabī Muḥammad*, Qumm, Dār al-Šarīf al-Raḍī, 1990, p. 312; Abū Ğahl (see *Tafsīr al-imām al-ʿAskarī*, p. 439; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Šarḥ nahğ al-balāġah*, vol. 4, p. 65; al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 17, p. 246); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mulğam (d. 661 CE) (see Ibn al-Baṭrīq [Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥasan al-Asadī al-Ḥillī], *ʿUmdat ʿuyūn ṣiḥāḥ al-aḫbār fī manāqib imām al-abrār*, Qumm, Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1986, p. 29; al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzīh al-anbiyāʾ wa ʾl-aʾimmah*, p. 166; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Šarḥ nahğ al-balāġah*, vol. 7, p. 93; al-Daylamī, *Iršād al-qulūb*, vol. 2, p. 435; ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Nabāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, vol. 1, p. 242; al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 18, p. 304, no. 10; vol. 42, p. 18, 287; vol. 45, p. 229; vol. 75, p. 72); ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ (d. 664) (see Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtiğāğ*, Mašhad, Našr al-Murtaḍā, 1982, vol. 1, p. 276; al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 119); Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (ruled 661-680 CE) (see Naṣr b. Muzāḥim b. Sayyār al-Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām M. Hārūn, Qumm, Maktabat āyat Allāh al-Marʿašī, 1982, p. 118; al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. ʿAlī b. Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī,

The types of seas evoked by the imāms

In the tales of the imāms' sea miracles a number of different types of sea are mentioned, each with its own specific function. They are as follows.

A. *The sea which protects the imām from danger.*

One type of sea mentioned in tales of the imāms' miracles is one which serves as a barrier between the imām and his enemies, preventing the latter from taking him prisoner or killing him. The imām's action in this case is reminiscent of Moses, who cast his stick and split the sea; the imām, in fact, outdoes Moses in his miracle, since he prays on the water and does not sink in it. In this context it is told of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid bi-Allāh[97] (ruled 892-902 CE) that he sent three of his men to arrest the imām Muḥammad al-Qāʾim[98] (occulted in 874 CE) at his home in the city of Sāmarrāʾ.[99] The Caliph's men broke into the imām's home and found themselves in front of a curtain. When they raised it

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Nahǧ al-ḥaqq wa kašf al-ṣidq, Qumm, Muʾassasat Dār al-Hiǧrah, 1986, p. 309; Abū al-Qāsim Ǧaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, al-Naǧaf, Dār al-Murtaḍawiyyah li-ʾl-Našr, 1977, p. 177; al-Mufīd, *al-Iḫtiṣāṣ*, p. 124; Sadīd al-Dīn Šāḏān b. Ǧibrāʾīl al-Qummī, *al-Faḍāʾil*, Qumm, Dār al-Raḍī, 1943[2], p. 77; Ibrāhīm ʿAlī al-Kafʿamī, *al-Balad al-amīn*, no place and no date, p. 271; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Šarḥ nahǧ al-balāġah*, vol. 16, p. 44; Abū Ǧaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahaǧǧid*, Beirut, Muʾassasat Fiqh al-Šīʿah, 1990, p. 293); the second Umayyad Caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiyah (ruled 680-683 CE) (for details see al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzīh al-anbiyāʾ wa ʾl-aʾimmah*, Qumm, Dār al-Šaraf al-Raḍī, 1834, p. 175; al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 3, p. 287, no. 151; vol. 45, p. 96, 99, 273); Šamir b. Ḏī al-Ǧawšan al-Ḥabābī (d. 686 CE), who killed al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (see al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 55, 264); ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 686 CE) (see al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzīh al-anbiyāʾ wa ʾl-aʾimmah*, p. 177-178; al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarsī, *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā*, Qumm, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1970[3], p. 226; al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 119; vol. 53, p. 20); ʿUmar b. Saʿd (d. 686 CE) (see al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzīh al-anbiyāʾ wa ʾl-aʾimmah*, p. 177); al-Aḫnas b. Šarīq (d. 683 CE), a well-known dissembler (see Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Šarḥ nahǧ al-balāġah*, vol. 8, p. 301); the Abbasid Caliph al-Maʾmūn (ruled 813-833 CE), whom Šīʿite accuse of having poisoned the imām al-Riḍā (see al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzīh al-anbiyāʾ wa ʾl-aʾimmah*, p. 175; al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 27, p. 344; vol. 30, p. 287, no. 151; vol. 42, p. 296; vol. 45, p. 96, 99, 273); the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (ruled 847-861 CE), who was called "the accursed one" because he ordered the tomb of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in Karbalāʾ to be plowed (see al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 404); Pharaoh, because he mistreated his subjects (see Nūr Allāh al-Šuštarī, *al-Ṣawārim al-muḥriqah fī naqd al-ṣawāʿiq al-muḥriqah*, ed. Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī, Teheran, Maṭbaʿat al-Nahḍah, 1947, p. 269).

96 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah*, p. 142-143.

97 – The sixteenth Abbasid Caliph; for details on him see *EI*[2], *s.v.* «Al-Muʿtaḍid Bi-ʾLāh» (E. Lévi-Provençal), vol. 7, 1993, p. 760-761.

98 – The twelfth imām; for details on him see *EI*[2], *s.v.* «Muḥammad al-Kāʾim» (J.G.J Ter Haar), vol. 7, 1993, p. 443.

99 – A city on the east bank of the Tigris, 118 km north of Baghdad. It was built by the Abbasid Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim bi-Allāh (ruled 833-842 CE). See *EI*[2], *s.v.* «Sāmarrāʾ» (A. Northedge), vol. 8, 1995, p. 1041.

they saw a broad sea at the other end of which the imām sat in prayer on a mat which hovered over the water and did not sink; the imām paid no attention to the Caliph's men.

One of the attackers, Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh by name, tried to approach the imām and arrest him, but he nearly drowned and only managed to extricate himself with difficulty. Another man then repeated the attempt, which also failed, whereupon all three asked the imām to forgive them and to ask for God's forgiveness on their behalf as well. They then returned to the Caliph and informed him of what had happened. Al-Muʿtaḍid was filled with wonder and asked the men not to divulge the incident.[100]

This type of tale aroused the Šīʿite believer's dread and wonder. The sea in this miracle plays the role of a haven for the imām, protecting him from his enemies who, if they try to harm him, are in danger of drowning. Perhaps we are also meant to understand that perhaps the imām affected his enemies' vision, so that they only thought they were seeing him praying over the water; this is quite possible, since in the Šīʿite view an imām can make people see what he wants.[101] This tale also shows that the imām is deemed capable of supernatural acts in general, such as floating in the air above the water.[102] The performance of such miracles proves to the believer that the person claiming to be an imām is indeed what he claims to be, since he does things which are beyond the ability of other mortals.

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100 – For details see al-Rāwandī, *al-Ḫarāʾiġ wa ʾl-ǧarāʾiḥ*, vol. 1, p. 460-461, whence Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Faraǧ al-mahmūm*, p. 248; ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Nīlī al-Naǧafī, *Muntaḫab al-anwār al-muḍīʾah*, ed. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Kūhakmarī, Qumm, Maṭbaʿat al-Ḫayyām, 1980, p. 140-141; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Ġaybah*, Qumm, Muʾassasat al-Maʿārif al-Islāmiyyah, 1990, p. 249-250, whence al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 52, p. 51-52, no. 36; al-Irbillī, *Kašf al-ġummah*, vol. 2, p. 499-500; Hāšim al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿāǧiz*, Qumm, Muʾassasat al-Maʿārif al-Islāmiyyah, 1992, vol. 8, p. 65-67.

101 – For more details on the power of imāms to affect what others see, see for example E. Kolhberg, "Vision and the Imams", p. 125-157.

102 – Praying and walking on water are abilities which are not ascribed only to imāms. Sunnī sources tell of a number of the Prophet's Companions who also walked on water, as did some ṣūfī saints, who also prayed on water without sinking or even getting wet. Thus it is related of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. 675 CE) that he and his troops walked on the Tigris river and crossed it just before the battle of al-Qādisiyyah in the year 16 AH (see Yūsuf b. Ismāʿīl al-Nabahānī, *Ǧāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿIzzat al-Bayyūmī, Cairo, al-Maktabah al-Tawfīqiyyah, n.d., vol. 1, p. 141-142). Another tale reports that Abū Hurayrah (d. 679 CE) and ʿAlāʾ b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 642 CE) walked together on the surface of the sea (ibid., vol. 1, p. 153-154). Yet another tale of this kind relates the Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Būlāqī, an eminent ṣūfī, walked on the sea, stopped a boat whose sailors had kidnapped a child and returned the child to its mother safe and sound (ibid., vol. 1, p. 175). As for people who are reported to have prayed above water, one such was Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Sayyid Ḥamdawayh, also known as al-Muʿallim Abū Bakr al-Taymī. It is related that he spread his cloak over a pool and prayed. After he finished his prayer he picked up his cloak without getting wet (ibid., vol. 1, p. 173).

Fear of the authorities would appear to have been one of the stimuli for this miracle. The issue of the imāms' relations with the political authorities has always been a sensitive point among Šīᶜites.

B. *The sea as the abode of the hidden imām*

One of the seas which an imām may evoke is located under the earth. On the shores of this sea ride two horsemen who place their beards on their saddlebows.[103] Both horsemen are supporters of the twelfth imām Muḥammad al-Mahdī (occulted in 874 CE).[104] We encounter this sea in a report by Abū Baṣīr,[105] who relates: "Once when I was with the imām Abū ᶜAbd Allāh [Ǧaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq] there was a man from Khurasān present, who spoke to him in a language which I did not understand. During their conversation the imām al-Ṣādiq stomped on the ground with his foot, and there I saw a sea under the earth.[106] In this miracle the function of the sea is apparently to indicate the abode of the twelfth imām, whose spirit is preserved in that sea, on whose shore the two horsemen[107] keep guard and await the imām's return.

With tales of this kind Shīᶜte writers inculcate the idea of the las imām's occultation and his eventual return at the end of time.

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103 – The two horsemen would appear to serve as guards of the hidden imām's home. In the manner of imāms and the Prophet Muḥammad they ride mounts. Whenever the mount, usually an donkey, would strut about in self-importance, they would put their heads on the saddlebow as a mark of humility. This is what the Prophet did, too, when he rode his donkey ᶜUfayr (or Yaᶜfūr), and the Šīᶜite imāms followed his custom. For details see the author's paper, Kh. Sindawi, "The Prophet's Ass in Shīᶜite Tradition", *Al-Masaq*, 18 (2006), p. 87-98.

104 – For details about him see *EI²*, *s.v.* «Muhammad al-Ḳā'im» (G.J. Ter Haar), vol. 7, 1993, p. 443.

105 – Four known figures were given the agnomen Abū Baṣīr: Layṯ b. al-Baḫtarī al-Murādī, Yaḥyà b. Abī Qāsim, Yūsuf b. al-Ḥāriṯ, and ᶜAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Asadī. See *Riǧāl al-Ḥillī*, p. 392-393; *Riǧāl Ibn Dāwūd*, p. 393, nos. 7-9. Since all four transmitted traditions in the imām al-Ṣādiq's name it is impossible to determine which one is meant here.

106 – Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāmah*, 245, whence al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maᶜāǧiz*, vol. 6, p. 185, no. 1916:346; al-Mufīd, *al-Iḫtiṣāṣ*, p. 325, whence al-Maǧlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 47, p. 89, no. 94.

107 – The hidden's imām's home, according to Šīᶜite tradition, appears to be permanently protected by two guards, humans or wild beasts such as tigers and lions. Thus, for example, the Šīᶜite sect known as the Ḥanafiyyah (or the Kaysāniyyah) believes that the hidden imām is Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyyah (d. 700 CE), who went into hiding in a cave on Mt. Raḍwā near al-Madīnah. He is said to have provisions of water and honey, and two guards, a lion on his right and a tiger on his left, protect him until the time will come for him to return. According to other traditions the guards are a pair of lions or a pair of tigers. Yet another tradition mentions two tigers and a lion, and there is also a tradition that just mentions lions and tigers in the plural, without a specific number (see Widād al-Qāḍī, *al-Kaysāniyyah fī al-tārīḫ wa 'l-adab*, Beirut, 1974, p. 180-181). I. Friedlander is of the opinion that Shīᶜism has been influenced by the Hebrew prophet Isaiah (11:6-9), see "The Heterodoxies of the Shi'ite in the Presentationof Ibn Ḥazm", *JAOS*, 29 (1909), p. 37-38.

C. *The black sea*[108]

Among the seas which the imāms conjure is one that is black. It is populated by the suffering black-faced and blue-eyed enemies of Shīᶜism.[109]

The shores of the white sea in Paradise is lined with the homes of the righteous, while the black sea is in hell. Under it the enemies of Shīᶜism suffer there in the interval between their death and their resurrection on the Day of Judgment.

The sea is black, in allusion to the black character of its denizens, who are malicious sinners. The black color may also have been chosen by Šīᶜite writers in order to frighten and deter people from showing hostility towards Shīᶜism. The features of the sea have apparently been taken from depictions of the Valley of Barahūt;[110] in fact, the black sea may actually have been identified with that valley. The valley is described as the most evil on the face of the earth and as belonging to hell.[111] It is a dark valley, located in the Ḥaḍramawt region of Yemen. It is the hottest valley on earth, and is populated by the spirits of non-believers, which meet at dawn and return to the fire in the evening; they are doomed to remain so until the Day of Resurrection.[112]

Conclusion

God provided the imāms with a sea for their journey from earth to Paradise; He granted the power to evoke it whenver they wished. The main objective of this idea is to further the Šīᶜite cause and the idea that the Šīᶜite imāms possess the right of succession to the leadership of the Muslim community. The maritime miracles performed by the Shīᶜīte imāms are meant to provide proof of their

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108 – The black sea here is an imaginary sea of Šīᶜite lore, with no connection to the Black Sea in south-eastern Europe.

109 – See the story of Ǧaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq and Dāwūd b. Kaṯīr al-Raqqī above, in the section entitled "Dwellers of the sea and the seashore in the imāms' miracles", and footnotes 91-96 there.

110 – According to a number of sources Barahūt is a deep well whose bottom cannot be reached. See al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 57, p. 206, no. 4.

111 – Some Šīᶜite sources maintain that Barahūt is the road to hell.

112 – For more on the Valley of Barahūt see *EI*², *s.v.* «Barahūt» (G. Rentz), vol. 1, 1960, p. 1045; al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, p. 322; al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-daraǧāt*, p. 404, no. 3; al-Astarābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhirah*, p. 196; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāmah*, p. 101; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 246, nos. 3-5, whence al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 6:289, nos. 11-12; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 386, no. 3; Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī b. Ḥasan al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ᶜuqūl ᶜan āl al-rasūl*, ed. ᶜAlī Akbar al-Ġaffārī, Qumm, Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1983², 228, whence al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 33, p. 238, no. 518; al-Ṣadūq, *al-Ḫiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 440, no. 33; al-Ṣadūq, *al-Šarāʾiᶜ*, vol. 2, p. 595; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ašᶜaṯ al-Kūfī, *al-Ǧaᶜfariyyāt*, or *al-Ašᶜatiyyāt*, Teheran, Maktabat Naynawā al-Ḥadīṯah, n.d., p. 190; al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsin*, vol. 2, p. 573, no. 18; al-Ṣadūq, *ᶜUyūn aḫbār al-riḍā*, ed. Mahdī al-Ḥusaynī al-Lāǧūrdī, Teheran, Dār al-ᶜĀlam li-ʾl-Našr (Ǧihān), 1958, vol. 1, p. 244, whence al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 268, no. 14; al-Ǧazāʾirī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, p. 258; al-Ḥurr al-ᶜĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-šīᶜah*, Qumm, Muʾassasat āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāṯ, 1989, vol. 25, p. 260, chap. 16, no. 31860; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, vol. 17, p. 18, chap. 13.

standing for their companions as well as for those who doubt their powers. God, the Creator of everything, including the sea, has put the latter under the imāms' control in order to demonstrate their right to the imamate.

The sea as an element in the miracles performed by Šīᶜite imāms serves a religious and ideological function. Šīᶜite writers used it to show that an imām can freely travel beyond the bounds of the earth, and that the limitations imposed on mere mortals do not apply to him. Indeed, he can also free his companions on his sea journey from these same limitations.

Since the sea here serves a purely religious function, Šīᶜite writers on the subject naturally did not deal with technical issues of boat navigation, or the time the journey took. These were unimportant facts in a story whose main purpose was to present the imāms' island in Paradise.

The sea itself and the miracles performed on it, as part of this story, functioned as a means which Šīᶜite writers used to demonstrate the imāms' powers; they had control of the sea, crossed it in literally no time at all, and used it to travel from the earth to Paradise.

As we saw at the outset of the present study, the sea among Arabs and Muslims aroused fear and sea travel was considered dangerous. In the imām's case, however, the sea is subservient to him, and as a result it is beautiful and calm. Šīᶜite writers obviously took pride, albeit indirectly, in describing their imāms' maritime journeys, their control of the sea and their ability to evoke it whenever they so desired.

The imāms' connections with the sea are of several different kinds:

A. The sea connects the imāms with the imāms' islands in Paradise; it is the place where the human and the divine worlds meet, so that the living imām and his companions can encounter the imāms who are already in Paradise.
B. The sea is a safe place where the imām is protected from his enemies.
C. The sea is where the enemies of Shīᶜism are punished.
D. The sea is the dwelling place of the hidden imām.

The sea in tales of the imāms' miracles thus possesses a double character. It is both fantastic and realistic. In other words, it possesses real attributes, such as boats, water, islands, and fish. But at the same time it is also a place of supernatural wonders and miracles.

An imām's maritime miracle can be perfomed in the sea, on the surface, on the shore, on an island, or underneath the sea. Whatever the exact location of the miracle, the sea plays an important role in Šīᶜite miracles and their main objective, of convincing those who doubt the imām's powers and authority.

KHALID SINDAWI

NOAH AND NOAH'S ARK AS THE PRIMORDIAL MODEL OF SHĪᶜISM IN SHĪᶜITE LITERATURE*

1. *Introduction*

In the present study my aim is to illuminate two major ideas in the broad field of intellectual interplay between Shīᶜism[1] and other religions. The one is the notion, made already in early Twelver Shīᶜism, that all prophets and their deeds are but primordial models for the Shīᶜa itself. The second is that the person and actions of Noah specifically, like those of other prophets, are taken to testify to the antiquity of Shīᶜism and the Shīᶜite creed.[2] The following pages constitute an attempt at elaborating these ideas.

2. *Noah's Ark as a model of Shīᶜism*

An obvious question to ask at this point is: what were the features of the story of Noah and his Ark which made it such a suitable model of their creed for Shīᶜites? The answer lies in two vital elements that invoke in Shīᶜites an image of their self-identity. One of these elements in the story of Noah and the Flood is the traditional perception of the story as telling the fate of the believers, who escape God's wrath, in contrast to that of the infidels, who are subject to divine punishment. The second element is the salvation of Noah through Divine revelation and intervention, which for Shīᶜites has been a source of inspiration for their own post-deluvian reality, for they see themselves as being "in the same boat" so to speak as Noah's family. Shīᶜites thus feel as certain of being saved because of their belief in their saintly Imāms, whom they consider as their own lifeboats or "arks" in the afterworld, as was the tiny minority of believers who followed Noah into the Ark.

In the present study we shall follow the evolution of the story of Noah and the Ark in Shīᶜite traditions from the beginning of its construction until it landed on Mt. Jūdī, and describe how the story provided Shīᶜism with a venerable pedigree going back

* I would like to express my gratitude to prof. Joseph Sadan who read the manuscript and made valuable comments and suggestions. I would also like to mention that some of the references used in this paper are cited from Noor Cd-Roms.

1 "Shīᶜa" and "Shīᶜite" refer throughout this article to Imāmī (Twelver) Shīᶜism.

2 For more on arguments for the antiquity of Shīᶜism see Kohlberg 1980, pp. 41-66.

to time immemorial and gave demonstrated the superiority of the Shīᶜites over their enemies and oppressors. Shīᶜites have gone back thousands of years in search of such proof, long before they themselves appeared on the stage of history, in fact back to the time before creation itself.[3] According to this view, ᶜAlī is just one link in a chain of prophets and Imāms which began with Adam.

According to the Qurᵓān Noah's ark (*safīna* or *fulk* in Arabic)[4] was a vessel which Noah built on God's command. In it he put his human and beastly companions to save them from the Flood.[5] However, in Twelver Shīᶜism[6] the story evolved and developed new dimensions and details that made it consistent with the Shīᶜite creed, as we shall see below.

3. *When and where Noah's Ark was constructed*

Shīᶜite traditions tell us that Noah lived in a village on the bank of the Euphrates[7] just west of Kūfa.[8] Noah according to these traditions was a carpenter[9] whom God made a prophet. His people scorned and despised him, whereupon he invoked God against them: "Noah said: My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers in the land. If Thou shouldst leave them, they will mislead Thy slaves and will beget none save lewd ingrates".[10] Then God commanded him to hurry and construct a large ark. Noah brought wood from afar and constructed the entire Ark with his own hands, in the middle of the mosque of Kūfa.[11]

Tradition has it that the construction of the Ark lasted for two cycles, or eighty years.[12] However, the common people among the Shīᶜites hold that it took him five-hundred years[13] to complete his project or, according to one tradition, one-hundred

3 Thus Shīᶜite tradition relates, for example, that humans were commanded to swear allegiance to the Imāms before creation, when they were still nothing more than seeds surrounding God's Throne. For details see al-ᶜAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2, p. 258; al-Ṣaffār 1983, p. 72, no. 1; p. 89, no. 1.

4 The two Arabic words are synonyms, both meaning vessel or boat. See Ibn Manẓūr 1990, vol. 10, p. 479. Noah's Ark is mentioned twenty-three times in the Qurᵓān; see ᶜAbd al-Bāqī 1986, p. 526, root FLK.

5 For further details on the story of Noah see Canova 2001, pp. 1-20.

6 On Twelver (Imāmi) Shīᶜism see Nasr 1991, pp. 277-279.

7 For more on the Euphrates see Hartmann 1991, p. 946.

8 For more on Kūfa see Djait 1986, vol. 5, p. 345.

9 al-Rāwandī 1988, p. 84.

10 Qur. 6:26-27; Pickthall 2000, p. 567.

11 al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 11, p. 332; vol. 97, pp. 395, 403; al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 3, pp. 399, 404; al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 8, p. 281; al-Ṭūsī 1945, vol. 3, p. 251.

12 al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 8, p. 280. Cf. this with what al-Kisāᵓī says: "The construction of the ark occupied Noah for a month", al-Kisāᵓī 1922-1923, p. 92.

13 al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 8, p. 281.

years.[14] Noah's Ark is deemed to have been the first floating vessel in human history.[15] According to these tradition the mosque of Kūfa[16] was the site of the Ark's construction.[17] These traditions do not of course claim that the mosque existed at the time, but merely that the Ark was constructed precisely where the mosque would be constructed. What this claim actually means is that Noah was aware of the sanctity which the place where he constructed his Ark would possess for the followers of ʿAlī in the far future.

4. *The beginning of the Ark's journey*

There is some disagreement among Shīʿite sources as to where the Ark's journey began.[18] While most sources agree that the mosque of Kūfa was the point of departure, some traditions claim that the Ark began its journey at the al-Aqṣā

[14] al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2, p. 147, *ḥadīth* no. 6. Cf. Canova 2001, p. 4.

[15] al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 11, p. 33; al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 3, p. 393; al-Suyūṭī 1988, p. 59.

[16] Shīʿite sources claim that the mosque at Kūfa known even in antiquity, having been the site of many important occurrences and possessing numerous merits. Thus, for example, it is claimed that the angels bowed before God there before Adam did, that it was the first mosque on earth, and that Adam had designed it. See Kohlberg 1980, p. 57. Other legends relate that it is one of the gardens of Paradise, where one-thousand-and-seventy prophets prayed, that Moses' staff, the Tree of Yaqṭīn, and the Seal of Solomon are kept in it, and that it serves as a meeting place for the prophets. See, for example, al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2, p. 146, *ḥadīth* no. 21; al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 3, pp. 252, 490-494, nos. 1-9. It is further said that when Muḥammad was on his famous nightly journey he passed by the site of the mosque of Kūfa on his steed al-Burāq and asked the angel Gabriel for permission to kneel and pray there. His request was granted and he came down and prayed. See al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, cit.; Ibn Bābawayh 1992, vol. 1, p. 231. Still another tradition maintains that Adam designed the mosque but then the design was changed again and again, first because of the Flood, then by the Persian king Khosrau, by Nuʿmān, and by Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān. See, for example, Ibn Bābawayh 1992, vol. 1, p. 230. Shīʿite sources also list a number of virtues of the site, among them that saying an obligatory prayer there is equivalent to performing the *ḥajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca, that a supererogatory prayer there is the equivalent of an *ʿumra* or minor *ḥajj*, that its grace extends out to a distance of twelve miles, and that in its center there are a spring of oil, a spring of milk, a spring of drinking water, and a spring of water for ritual purification. For details see al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 97, pp. 400-405, 425, 430-453; al-Barqī 1951, vol. 1, p. 56; Ibn Bābawayh 1985, p. 30. Finally, this is the site where the twelfth Imām, the *Mahdī*, who disappeared in Sāmarrāʾ in the year 874 CE, will eventually make his reappearance. See, for example, al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2, p. 242, *ḥadīth* no. 51; Schedina 1981; Ter Haar 1993, vol. 8, p. 443.

[17] See Kohlberg 1980, pp. 57-58.

[18] al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2, p. 147, *ḥadīth* nos. 23-24; Ibn Qūlawayh 1977, p. 32; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 97, p. 403; al-Ṭūsī 1945, vol. 3, p. 251, *ḥadīth* no. 9; al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 5, pp. 261-262, *ḥadīth* no. 6495.

mosque.[19] Still other sources relate that the point of departure was the Kaʿba in Mecca, where Noah went on pilgrimage. These sources tell that the Ark circled the Kaʿba seven times, then moved back-and-forth between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa seven times, and finally settled on Mt. Jūdī[20] which, so it claimed, is located in Najaf.

According to tradition the Ark departed on the first day of the month of Rajab.[21] Noah fasted on that day and commanded all who were with him to fast as well.[22] In Shīʿism Rajab has become something of a holy month, which saw many important events take place. In fact, as the story here demonstrates, Shīʿites believe that the month's sanctity goes back to prehistoric times.

5. *How Noah and his Ark are associated with Shīʿism*

Shīʿites have found a number of connections between the story of Noah and Noah's Ark and their own history and creed. It was their intention to seek legitimacy through such venerable antecedents, as we pointed out at the beginning of article. Below we present some of the arguments they used for this purpose.

5.1 *Noah's Ark stops above Karbalāʾ*

In Shīʿite tradition a number of links exist between itself and the story of Noah. One of these is the claim that the Ark passed over Karbalāʾ,[23] where al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (d. 680 CE)[24] was killed. When the Ark was just over the spot the earth grabbed it and Noah feared it would sink. He said: "My God, when the world was flooded I was not stricken by such fear as when we passed over this plot of land.

[19] al-Hilālī 1994, p. 559; al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 3, p. 491.

[20] Fore more on Mt. Jūdī see Streck 1991, pp. 573-574.

[21] For more on the month of Rajab see Kister 1970, pp. 191-223; Id. 1995, vol. 8, pp. 373-374; al-Ḥiskānī 1990.

[22] See Ibn Bābawayh 1992, vol. 2, p. 91, no. 1820; al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 7, p. 226; vol. 10, p. 471; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 11, p. 304; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1947, p. 635; Ibn Bābawayh 1976, p. 21; al-Ṭūsī 1993, p. 44; Ibn Bābawayh 1985, p. 53; Id. 1982 (*al-Khiṣāl*), vol. 20, p. 502; al-Fattāl 1966, vol. 2, p. 395; al-Ḥiskānī 1990, p. 498; al-Ṭūsī 1990, p. 797; al-Kafʿamī 1984, p. 478. See also al-Kisāʾī 1922-1923, p. 94. In fact, based on their tradition that this was the date of the Ark's departure, Shīʿites have come to attach special merit to fasting on the first of the month of Rajab. Fasting on that day is said to drive the fires of Hell away from the person fasting. In another version fasting seven days during that month drives away seven doors that open unto the fires of Hell. Eight days of fasting open eight doors to Paradise, whoever fasts fifteen days has his wishes granted. The more one fasts the more will one receive from God. For details see al-Mufīd 1992, p. 371. Cf. al-Nābulsī 1986, pp. 27-32; al-Ṭabarī 1960, vol. 1, p. 19; al-Diyārbakrī, no date, p. 72.

[23] See Honigmann, 1990, vol. 4, pp. 637-639; Kanazi 1992, pp. 187-194.

[24] See Veccia Vaglieri 1986, vol. 3, pp. 607-615.

Then the angel Gabriel[25] revealed to Noah what would happen to Ḥusayn, that "he would be killed on this spot".[26] Noah was greatly saddened and cried. He became known as Noah[27] for having lamented the holy ground[28] where Ḥusayn was killed.[29]

[25] See Pedersen 1986, vol. 2, p. 345.

[26] In another tradition the angel said: "Here the grandson of Muḥammad, Seal of the prophets, and son of the Seal of the successors (*awsiyāʾ*) will be killed", whereupon Noah asked Gabriel who the killer is. Gabriel answered: "His killer is a man cursed by the inhabitants of seven heavens and seven earths". Noah then cursed him four times and then the Ark continued on its way until it landed on Mt. Jūdī. See al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 44, p. 243. According to this story Noah was not only aware of what would happen thousands of years hence, but also expressed his definite sympathies with the Shīʿite cause.

[27] In Arabic *Nūḥ* (derived by popular etymology from the Arabic root NWḤ, meaning to lament). Shīʿite sources disagree as to Noah's original name. According to some traditions at first his name was al-Sakan, which was changed later to Nūḥ because he lamented his people for one-thousand years less fifty (for more details see, for example, al-Majlisī, 1984, vol. 10, p. 78; Ibn Bābawayh 1966, vol. 2, p. 594; Id., 1958, vol. 1, p. 243; al-Jazāʾirī 1983, p. 68). According to another tradition his original name was ʿAbd al-Ghaffār (see al-Nabāṭī 1964, vol. 2, p. 44) and was changed to Nūḥ for the same reason as above. Still another tradition, quoting Abū ʿAbd Allāh [the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq], while agreeing that his original name was ʿAbd al-Ghaffār, gave Noah's lament for himself as the reason for the change in name (see al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 15, pp. 224, 255; al-Qummī 1983, vol. 1, p. 328; al-Jazāʾirī 1983, p. 68; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 11, pp. 281, 305). A further tradition gives his original name as ʿAbd al-Malik, and claims that the change in name is due to the fact that he cried for five-hundred years (see al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 15, p. 225; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 11, p. 286; Ibn Bābawayh 1966, vol. 1, p. 28; al-Jazāʾirī 1983, p. 68). Yet another tradition states that his name was at first ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, with the change in name also ascribed to five-hundred years of crying (see Ibn Bābawayh 1966, vol. 1, p. 28; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 11, p. 286). One tradition merely says that he was named Nūḥ because he lamented profusely (Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 3, p. 243). Al-Ṣadūq claims that the various original names ascribed to Noah do not contradict each other, for they all refer to his devotion to God, and so he was indeed the servant (*ʿAbd*) of the Forgiving (*al-Ghaffār*), the King (*al-Malik*) and the Supreme (*al-Aʿlā*) (see al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 15, p. 225). Clearly these various traditions reflect disagreements with respect to both the name itself and the reason why it was changed. However, what these Shīʿite sources have in common is a narrative that fits the Shīʿite creed and gives the reason for Noah's name as his lament for Ḥusayn, as if he were a member of his family, despite the fact that he lived thousands of years earlier. For Shīʿites this does not present a problem, since Noah as a prophet would know what to ordinary mortals was unknowable. For more on the name *Nūḥ* see Goldziher 1870, pp. 207-211.

[28] According to Shīʿite sources prophets and other righteous people visited Karbalāʾ and mourned there since the dawn of time. Among the prophets mentioned in this regard by Jaʿfar al-Tustarī, for example, we find the following: Adam when still in the Garden of Eden, Noah, Moses, al-Khaḍir, Solomon, Abraham, Jesus and Zacharias. All of these supposedly came to Karbalāʾ and sat in mourning for Ḥusayn. See al-Tustarī, no date, pp. 102-108.

[29] See, for example, al-ʿĀmilī 1984, pp. 10-11; Kanazi 1992, p. 187.

5.2 *The Ark comes to rest on the Jūdī*

Shīᶜite traditions and Qurʾānic commentators state that Noah and his fellow-travelers stayed inside the Ark for seven days and nights, that it revolved around the house for a week, and in the end rested on the Jūdī,[30] which they interpret as referring to a location on the Euphrates at Kūfa.[31] But even if that *is* the case, it is not clear what logic there is to the claim that after only seven days the waters of the Flood had receded enough for the Ark to touch ground. According to another tradition the Ark floated for six months more, until on the day of ᶜĀshūrāʾ[32] Noah landed on Mt. Jūdī and fasted, together with all those who were with him.[33]

Still another account has the Ark touching ground on the twenty-third of the month of Ramaḍān.[34] Other dates given for the Ark's *apobaterion* are the twenty-fifth of the month of Dhū al-Qaᶜda (the day on which the earth uncoiled, and on which whoever fasts has his sins forgiven for seventy years),[35] and the eighteenth of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja.[36] According to Mītham b. Yaḥyā al-Tammār[37] the claim

[30] See Streck 1991, pp. 207-211.

[31] al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 8, p. 281; al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 3, p. 401; al-ᶜAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2, p. 146, no. 21; al-Ṭabarī 1961, vol. 1, p. 190; al-Thaᶜlabī, no date, pp. 50-51; al-Qaramānī 1992, p. 63. The last-mentioned source has the Ark landing on the tenth of the month of Muḥarram. Cf. Canova 2001, p. 7.

[32] On ᶜĀshūrāʾ see Marçais 1986, vol. 1, p. 705; Sindawi 2001, pp. 200-211; Ayoub 1978.

[33] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 2, p. 384.

[34] al-Ṭūsī, 1990, p. 820.

[35] For more on the day of ᶜĀshūrāʾ see Kohlberg 1980, p. 57. Among the things that happened on that day are the following: God forgave Adam his sin (Ibn Manṣūr 1965, vol. 1, p. 284); Noah asked his people to repent (Ibn Ṭāwūs 1949, p. 239); Noah fasted and made it into a regular fast day (Ibn Manṣūr 1965, vol. 1, p. 338). Shīᶜites believe that no happy events can occur on that day (Ayoub 1978, pp. 150-151).

[36] Ibn Bābawayh 1966, vol. 1, p. 227. This date, the 18th of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja, is the anniversary of the famous Ghadīr Khumm incident, in which the Prophet, on his way back from the Farewell Pilgrimage in the year AH 10 stopped at the place of this name and when addressing his fellow pilgrims said: "He of whom I am the *mawlā*, of him ᶜAlī is also the *mawlā*" (*man kuntu mawlāh fa-ᶜAlī mawlāh*), an utterance which Shīᶜites interpret as meaning that the Prophet appointed ᶜAlī as leader of the Muslims after his death. See Veccia Vaglieri 1991, pp. 993-994.

[37] A client of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and before that a slave belonging to a woman of the Banū Asad. It is related that when ᶜAlī bought him he embraced and asked him for his name. The slave said: "Sālim". ᶜAlī answered: "The Messenger of God informed me that the name which your father gave you in Persia was Mītham". The slave then said: "God speaks the truth, and so does His Prophet, You are right, oh Commander of the Believers, it is indeed my name". He answered: "Then I shall give you back your name. We shall keep the name Sālim as your agnomen (*kunya*)", and he did indeed call him Abū Sālim. ᶜAlī revealed many things to him, including secrets pertaining to the Imāmate. Unfortunately Mītham talked to others about some of these things, and as a result the

that the Ark landed on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ is false.[38] Still other traditions maintain that the Ark stopped on Mt. Jūdī on the day of *Nayrūz*.[39]

What all these Shīʿite traditions concerning the date on which the Ark touched ground have in common is that they commemorate important events in Shīʿite history or in the Shīʿite creed. Thus the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ is venerated by Shīʿites[40] as the day on which al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī was killed, and as a day of fasting from time immemorial. The twenty-third of Ramaḍān[41] falls during the last ten nights of the month, which are all associated with *laylat al-qadr*. The twenty-fifth of Dhū al-Qaʿda is the day on which the earth was unrolled from under the Kaʿba[42] or, according to another tradition, on which the Kaʿba came down from heaven.[43] The eighteenth of Dhū al-Ḥijja[44] is, as mentioned above, the anniversary of ʿAlī's appointment at Ghadīr Khumm.

Despite the different dates mentioned in the various traditions concerning the landing of the Ark it is thus clear that the story itself has been utilized for the purpose of demonstrating the existence of a link between the Shīʿite Imāms and

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people of Kūfa came to think of ʿAlī as a swindler and a fraud. See Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 1967, vol. 2, pp. 291-292; al-Raḍḍī 1985, p. 54; al-Barqī 1963, pp. 4, 7; al-Kishshī 1929, pp. 79-81, nos. 134-136; p. 85, no. 140; al-Ṭūsī 1994, p. 98, nos. 3–951; p. 105, nos. 1–1034.

38 al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 45, p. 203; Ibn Bābawayh 1966, vol. 1, p. 228; cf. Heller 1995, vol. 8, pp. 111-112.

39 al-Jazāʾirī 1983, p. 82; al-Aḥsāʾī 1984, vol. 3, p. 42, no. 117; al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 8, pp. 173-174, no. 10340; al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 6, p. 352, nos. 1–6792. The meaning of the term, which also appears in the form *nawrūz*, is New Year. It is the first day of the Persian solar year, falling on the vernal equinox (March 21). However, according to Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī *nayrūz* is the first day of the Hijra year (see Levy 1993, p. 1047). As is its wont with respect to venerated dates, *nayrūz* is also claimed to possess numerous virtues and various important events are supposed to have occurred on it, as if to say that God willed that on this venerated day events of momentous import to Shīʿites should occur. Certainly the choice of *nayrūz* as a holy day is not coincidental, since many followers of Shīʿism are Persians, who probably transferred various traditions from their original Persian heritage into their new creed. Among these are traditions concerning the virtues of *nayrūz*, such as the following: It was the day when for the first time the sun rose, the wind blew, and blossoms appeared; on this day the Prophet carried the Commander of the Believers [ʿAlī] on his shoulders until he threw the idols of the tribe of Quraysh down from the roof of the Kaʿba and smashed them; on this day Abraham did the same; on this day, too, the Prophet took ʿAlī to the Valley of the Jinn and made them swear allegiance to them, the Commander of the Believers received the second pledge of allegiance, overcame the people of al-Nahrawān and killed Dhū al-Thudayya; and finally, it is the day on which the Hidden Imām will reappear. See al-Nūrī 1988; al-ʿĀmilī 1988, vol. 8, pp. 158-170, no. 2–9254, quoted in al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 56, p. 92.

40 On the sanctity of the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ for Shīʿites see Sindawi 2001, pp. 200-214.

41 On the month of Ramaḍān see Plessner 1995, pp. 417-418.

42 al-Ḥillī 1987, p. 315.

43 al-Ṭūsī 1990, pp. 669, 820.

44 On the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja see De Blois 2000, pp. 257-302, and in particular p. 258.

God's prophets. Both Imāms and prophets experience significant events at certain specific and well-known times, unlike ordinary mortals. But on the other hand, if we take at its face value the tradition that the Ark began its journey on the first day of the month of Rajab, and that a week later it landed on Mt. Jūdī, we must perforce conclude that the date of landing was the seventh of Rajab. And if we take the other tradition, that the Ark floated for six months, then it must have landed at the end of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja.[45] However, neither of these dates is mentioned in any Shīᶜite source.

To conclude, Shīᶜite writers would appear to have exploited the fact that so many different traditions existed concerning the date of the Ark's landing. The dates which they chose to propagate were of previous significance in the Shīᶜite creed and their connection with Noah's Ark was meant to strengthen the links between Shīᶜism and the ancient prophets, in order to demonstrate the antiquity and legitimacy of the former.

5.3 *Noah's Ark as a lifeboat ("Boat of Salvation")*

Shīᶜite sources relate the following tradition in the name of Abū Dharr al-Ghaffārī[46] (Jundub b. Junāda, d. 652 CE) which quotes the Prophet as saying: "After me there will be twelve Imāms, nine of them descendents of Ḥusayn. The ninth will be resurrected. They will be for you like Noah's Ark: Whoever rode it was saved, and whoever missed it perished".[47]

According to this tradition the Prophet declared that twelve of his descendents will be the lifeboats of the community, each one of them in fact being a kind of Noah's Ark. The Imams of the Shīᶜites are thus closely connected to the Ark. This interpretation is made explicit in al-Majlisī's commentary on the Qur'ānic verse "... related by progeny to each other",[48] where he says: "Noah's Ark brought about

[45] In fact, this date is attested in al-Kisāʾī 1922-1923, p. 97.

[46] His full name was Jundub b. Junāda b. Sufyān b. ᶜUbayd from Banī Ghaffār (agnomen: Abū Dharr). He was one of the Prophet's early companions, renowned for his sincerity and truthfulness. After the Prophet's death he emigrated to the Syrian desert. For more details see Robson 1986, vol. 1, pp. 114-115; al-Ziriklī 1986, vol. 2, p. 140; al-Barqī 1963, pp. 1, 63; al-Ṭūsī 1994, p. 32, no. 11–143; p. 59, biography 1–496; al-Kishshī 1929, pp. 27-29, nos. 52-55; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 1967, vol. 8, p. 255; al-Ḥiskānī 1990, vol. 1, pp. 229-231, no. 235; al-Ṭūsī, no date, pp. 45-46, no. 148; Ibn Saᶜd 1985, vol. 4, pp. 219-237; al-ᶜAsqalānī 1992, vol. 7, pp. 125-130; al-Iṣfahānī 1997, vol. 1, pp. 210-225.

[47] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 1, pp. 171, 295; vol. 3, p. 265; al-Thaᶜālibī 1977, p. 39; al-Karājukī 1988, vol. 2, p. 67; al-Qummī 1986, p. 40; al-Khazzāz 1980, pp. 33, 38, 210; al-Ḥillī 1990, p. 322; al-Irbillī 1961, vol. 1, pp. 51, 408; al-Hilālī 1994, pp. 559, 732, 830, 937; Ibn Shādhān 1943, p. 159; al-Nuᶜmānī 1976, p. 44; Shani 2002, p. 127.

[48] Qur. 3:34; Pickthall 2000, p. 59.

salvation in this world, and the progeny of Muḥammad [i.e., the Imāms[49] descended from ʿAlī and Fāṭima] will bring about salvation in the next world".

Even ʿAlī himself is quoted on several occasions as saying quite explicitly of himselft "I am the gate of the House, the authority who settles disputes, the mound of the earth, the decider of fate, and the boat of salvation. Whosoever rides it will be saved, and whoever misses it will perish".[50]

Al-Kisāʾī relates that God appeared to Noah and said to him: "Noah, your Ark will not remain sound unless you drive four nails into it on which you will have written the names of the four companions of Muḥammad, Abū Bakr (d. 634), ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644), ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 656) and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661)". Noah did so, and the Ark became sound. And then God made it speak, so that the people watched and heard the words "There is no God but Allāh and Noah is the prophet of Allāh. Whosoever rides me will be saved and whosoever misses me will perish. Only the sincere will enter me".[51] The Imāms are thus compared to Noah's Ark, for they, too, bring salvation to those who believe in them.[52]

The expression "lifeboat" (*safīnat al-najāt* – literally: Boat of Salvation) has become a venerated appellation (*laqab*)[53] of all the Shīʿite Imāms, but especially of ʿAlī,[54] to whom it was given by the Prophet himself as a mark of appreciation for

[49] According to the Shīʿite creed the power of intercession on behalf of the believers resides in the Prophet and in his successors and descendants the Imāms, who possess "Divine grace" and whom God chose as the saviors of mankind on the Day of Judgment. The Imāms thus serve as "life boats", having themselves died as martyrs. The most prominent Imām in this respect is the third, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, who suffered greatly, he and his family and companions, and died a martyr's death. Ḥusayn's struggle, his personality, principles, heroism and sacrifice, are all linked to pain, the pain to hope, and the hope to eventual salvation from the same Divine Will that imposed this pain and martyrdom. For humankind cannot by itself overcome human pain. Martyrdom thus became the way to grace and salvation and al-Ḥusayn himself became a "life boat", since he gave his own life for the salvation of the Muslims. See al-Ḥaydarī 1999, p. 308.

[50] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 2, p. 118; vol. 3, p. 90; al-Ṭūsī 1993, p. 60, no. 88-57; p. 349, no. 61-721; p. 459, no. 32-1026; p. 482, no. 22-1053; p. 531, no. 29-1122; p. 634, no. 6-1304; p. 733, no. 2-1532; al-Mufīd 1922 (2), p. 145, no. 5; al-Ṭabarī 1963, pp. 32, 88; al-Ṣaffār 1983, p. 297, no. 4; al-Ḥarrānī 1983, p. 113; Ibn Ṭāwūs 1992, pp. 620-621, no. 18; cf. al-Shaʿīrī 1984, pp. 14, 182; al-Kūfī 1989, p. 190, no. 243-190; al-Ḥalabī 1983, p. 125.

[51] al-Kisāʾī 1922-1923, p. 93.

[52] al-Kafʿamī 1984, p. 737.

[53] On the significance of appellations see, for ex., Poynton 1989, p. 41; see also Bāshā 1975.

[54] On the appellation "Boat of Salvation" as applied to ʿAlī see al-Rāwandī 1988, p. 173, no. 202; as applied to Ḥusayn see, for example, al-Ṭabarsī 1970, p. 400: "It is written on the right of God's Throne that Ḥusayn is a guiding lamp and a lifeboat...". For further information on ʿAlī's appellations and agnomina see Ibn Shādhān 1943, p. 175, who says that " ʿAlī has in all more than three-hundred names, appellations and agnomina", among them seventeen agnomina, including Abū al-Ḥasan, Abū al-Ḥusayn, Abū

his past actions and of encouragement in view of the leadership role he would play in future in this world, and the grace he would grant his followers in the afterworld. The image of a lifeboat has been used as an appellation by Shīᶜite poets. For example, Jaᶜfar b. Makkī al-Ḥājib,[55] a poet of the seventh century AH, says the following in two lines of a thirteen-line *qaṣīda*:[56]

> And as Noah built a boat that rescued him from an overwhelming current
> So is my sublime Lord ᶜAlī a boat in which his supporters will be saved

The poet here clearly compares Noah, who built an Ark in order to save himself and his supporters from drowning, to ᶜAlī, who is himself considered to be like the Ark for his own followers. In the Shīᶜite view Noah saved his people in this world, but ᶜAlī is a savior of his followers in the world to come, which is more important than this world.

Another poet who mentioned Noah's Ark as an image of a lifeboat for salvation was Abū ᶜUthmān al-Khālidī (d. ?):[57]

> Oh scornful one, I drape myself with devotion as a mark of my love for the people of the cover,
> Noah's Ark, whoever adheres to their rope will stay on the high ground

Here the poet addresses his detractors, telling them that he is devoted to the Prophet's family, whom the Prophet had covered with his cloak,[58] and that they, the

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Shabbar, Abū Turāb and Abū al-Nūrayn, as well as sixteen names and thirty-three appellations. For more on the appellations of Imāms in general, see al-Nuᶜmānī 1976, pp. 29, 44. Among the many names, appellations and agnomina given to ᶜAlī are the following: Ḥaydar, Abū al-Ḥasan, al-Imām, Abū Turāb, and Amīr al-Muᵓminīn (Commander of the believers). Some of his agnomina have been analyzed by modern scholars. See, for example, Kohlberg 1978, pp. 347-352 on the agnomen Abū Turāb. The title of Commander of the believers is the second most common appellation used for the Caliphs, after that of Caliph itself. The first Caliph to have had that appellation was ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. See al-Qalqashandī 1987, vol. 5, p. 445. Since then this appellation, referring to the Caliph's military role, became a title of all Caliphs. See Sharon 1982, p. 125.

55 See Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 1967, vol. 7, p. 137; vol. 9, p. 24; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 31, p. 83.

56 These lines are quoted from Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 3, p. 90.

57 The poem appears in Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 1258 CE) 1967, among poems disparaging this world. See Id., vol. 3, p. 346.

58 Here there is an allusion to a Qurᵓānic verse known as the "Verse of Purification": "For God wants to remove your impurity, family of the Prophet, to purify you completely" (Qur. 33:33). All Shīᶜite commentators agree that this verse refers to ᶜAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, and that what the Prophet did on that occasion was to spread his cloak over the four, who were joined also by the angel Gabriel, and said: "By God, these are my family. Take away their impurity and purify them completely", upon which the verse was revealed. See al-Qazwīnī 1993, pp. 90-93; al-Kūfī 1989, pp. 333-340, 420; al-Qummī 1982, vol. 1, p. 5; vol. 2, pp. 67,155, 193, 346.

Imāms, are a lifeboat for their followers, granting them salvation in this world and in the world to come.

5.4 *Noah pleads with the Prophet and his family for help*

Another connection which the Shīᶜa found between Noah and the Prophet's family concerns Noah's entreaties to God, the Prophet and his family when he feared that he would drown. According to Shīᶜite tradition this was his prayer: "Oh, God, I will pray to you in the name of Muḥammad, ᶜAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn if you save me from drowning". When he finished uttering the prayer he was saved from drowning. One tradition explains that God destroyed mankind in the Flood because they were hostile to ᶜAlī and would not accept him as their sovereign.[59]

5.5 *Noah's ass and Muḥammad's ass*

Shīᶜite writers found the following link between the asses of Noah and Muḥammad, in a tradition quoting Abū ᶜAbd Allāh [the Imām Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq] as saying: "With Noah in the Ark there was an ass.[60] Noah came up to it and stroked its rump, whereupon the ass spoke to Noah, saying: "From the loins of this ass shall come an ass on which the lord and seal of all prophets [Muḥammad] will ride. Praise be to God for having made me that ass".[61]

In this tradition Noah's ass speaks of its own accord,[62] telling Noah about the future birth of ᶜUfayr,[63] the Prophet's ass, and thanking God for having chosen it as the forefather.

[59] Ibn Bābawayh 1958, vol. 2, p. 54; al-Jazāᵓirī 1983, p. 67; al-ᶜĀmilī 1988, vol. 7, p. 100; Ibn Bābawayh 1982 (*al-Khiṣāl*), vol. 1, p. 335; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 16, p. 366; al-Shaᶜīrī 1984, p. 8; al-Astarabādī 1988, p. 53. Tradition has it that Abraham, too, mentioned the Prophet's family when imploring God. When he was thrown into the fire he is said to have prayed as follows: "Oh, God, I will pray in the name of Muḥammad and his family if you save me from [the fire]". Whereupon God caused the fire to cool. See Ibn Bābawayh 1983, pp. 218, 456; al-Fattāl 1966, vol. 2, p. 272. From these examples we see that in the Shīᶜite view not only God, but the Prophet and his family as well, are a means of salvation.

[60] See Canova 2001, p. 12.

[61] al-Kulaynī 1946, vol. 1, p. 237.

[62] A number of traditions report asses speaking to their masters. These were collected by Ṭughrul Bey in his book, *al-Nuṭq al-mafhūm min ahl al-ṣamt al-maᶜlūm.* For more detail, see Ṭughrul Bey 1864, pp. 82-86.

[63] On ᶜUfayr see Sindawi, forthcoming in the journal *al-Masaq*; al-ᶜĀmilī 1988, vol. 11, p. 489; al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 8, p. 265; al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 16, p. 126; vol. 61, p. 195; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 1, pp. 97, 168. As for the meaning of the name, one opinion has it that it is the diminutive form of *aᶜfar*, meaning dust-colored. In a tradition transmitted by Saᶜd b. ᶜUbāda it is claimed that the ass's name was Yaᶜfūr, with the same meaning as above. However, there is also a tradition which maintains that the latter name means a

Noah, like the prophet Solomon, has the ability to understand the speech of animals. Here he understands the utterance of his ass, who tells him that one of his descendants will be Muḥammad's ass. By this the Shīᶜites intend to create a link between Noah and the Prophet Muḥammad despite the great temporal distance between them. The Prophet's ass is thus seen as only the last link in a long chain of prophets' asses spanning the centuries from Adam, the first prophet, to Muḥammad, Seal of the Prophets. In fact, Noah's ass here foretells the coming of the Prophet Muḥammad.

5.6 *The tombs of Noah and ᶜAlī*

An additional fertile source of comparison between Noah and ᶜAlī is their supposed common grave. According to Shīᶜite sources Noah is buried in Najaf in the same tomb where the mortal remains of Adam,[64] Idrīs[65] and, later, ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, were laid to rest. It is reported that Abū Jaᶜfar [the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir[66] (d.732)] said: "When the Ark was moving around the Kaᶜba during the Flood it stopped next to the south corner. The angel Gabriel then came down over Noah and said 'God commands you to go down and stand between the Ark and the south corner. When your feet will be steady on the ground search there with your hand and you will find the coffin of your forefather Adam. Lift it out and take it with you on the Ark. When the water will have receded, bury it in Najaf, in white embers (*al-dhakawāt al-bīḍ*) from the soil of Kūfa. That is a burial plot for him, for you, and for ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the legatee of Muḥammad'.[67] Noah did as he was commanded, and ordered his son to bury him in the same plot, next to Adam's coffin". Then Abū Jaᶜfar added, addressing his followers: "When you visit the shrine of the Commander of the Believers, visit it as the shrine of Adam, Noah and the Commander of the Believers".[68]

According to this tradition a chain of prophets and Imāms, from Adam to ᶜAlī, were all buried in the same tomb, although Adam's body had to be transferred to Najaf[69] from Mecca. What the common burial site signifies is that in the Shīᶜite

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gazelle, and was given to the ass because it ran like one; still another tradition explains it as meaning a baby gazelle. See al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 16, p. 97. According to tradition ᶜUfayr died when the Prophet held him by the noseband, whereupon he ran until he reached a well belonging to Banī Ḥuṭama in Qubāᶜ and threw itself into it. The well thus became its grave. See al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 17, p. 404. Another tradition relates that it threw itself into a well belonging to Abū al-Haytham al-Tayhān. See al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 20, p. 382.

64 Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 3, pp. 242, 265. For more on Adam see Pedersen 1986, vol. 1, pp. 176-178; Kister 1993, pp. 113-174.

65 On Idrīs see Vajda 1986, pp. 1030-1.

66 See Kohlberg 1993, vol. 7, pp. 397-400.

67 al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 10, p. 219; Rubin 1979, p. 53; Kohlberg 1980, p. 58.

68 al-Nūrī 1988, vol. 10, p. 219; al-Karājukī 1989, vol. 2, p. 121; al-Shāᶜīrī 1984, p. 21.

69 For more on Najaf see Honigmann 1993, pp. 859-861.

view all these prophets and the Imām ʿAlī enjoy equal status, and that this had been decided by God at the very beginning of time.

Shīʿite sources further tell us that Noah dug his own grave, and that of ʿAlī next to it, and that he left a written testament in Syriac on teakwood, saying: "In the name of God, the kind the merciful. Noah dug this tomb for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib the legatee of Muḥammad seven-hundred years before the Flood".[70] As Noah was digging the tomb uttered the following line of poetry:

> Greetings to a grave containing Ḥaydar[71] and Noah, nor is Adam missing from it.

As this tradition makes abundantly clear, it is the Shīʿite belief that Noah knew of ʿAlī, and prepared a common tomb for both on God's command. ʿAlī, too, was aware of this connection, since he ordered his sons to bury him in the grave which Noah had prepared for him, and whose location he showed them. It is further related that when ʿAlī's sons came to bury him in that tomb they found Noah's inscription with the above-mentioned text.[72]

Here, again, we see how Shīʿite tradition links Noah and ʿAlī, in disregard of the great temporal distance between them. Indeed, it is the Shīʿite view that both Noah and ʿAlī, prophet and legatee, belong to the class of Men of God, and that the two types, prophet and legatee, have many traits in common.

5.7 *Both Noah and ʿAlī are bearers of the Throne*

In order to strengthen even more the ties between Noah and ʿAlī Abū Jaʿfar [the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir] gave his own interpretation to the following Qurʾānic verse (Qur. 40:7):

[70] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 2, p. 249; vol. 3, pp. 242, 265; al-Fattāl 1966, vol. 1, p. 136; al-Rāwandī 1988, vol. 1, p. 136; Rubin 1979, p. 53.

[71] The word *ḥaydar*, meaning 'lion', is one of the appellations of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. He was named thus by his mother Fāṭima, daughter of Asad b. Hāshim, in honor of her father (the word *asad* also means lion), since ʿAlī's father Abū Ṭālib was away when he was born. When he returned he changed his son's name to ʿAlī. ʿAlī composed the following poem on the incident: "I am whom my mother named Ḥaydar / Like a most forceful lion" (*layth* - another word meaning lion). Fore more detail see al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 20, p. 10; vol. 21, p. 9; vol. 27, p. 17; vol. 33, p. 283; vol. 35, p. 45; vol. 65, p. 60; vol. 35, pp. 39-62; vol. 67, p. 41; vol. 14, p. 60; vol. 86, p. 99; al-Mufīd 1992 (3), vol. 1, p. 127; al-Ṭūsī 1993, p. 4; al-Ṭabarī 1963, p. 12; al-Ṣaffār 1983, p. 98; al-Rāwandī 1988, vol. 1, p. 216; vol. 2, p. 856; Ibn Abī Ṭālib 1990, p. 216; al-Fattāl 1966, vol. 1, p. 130; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 1967, vol. 1, pp. 11-12; vol. 19, p. 127; al-Nabāṭī 1964, vol. 2, p. 35; Ibn al-Biṭrīq 1986, pp. 148, 151-152, 154, 157; Ibn Shādhān 1943, p. 175; al-Irbillī 1961, vol. 1, pp. 65, 214; Ibn Bābawayh 1982 (*Maʿānī al-akhbār*), pp. 58-60; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 3, pp. 3, 106 ff., 276; vol. 4, pp. 21, 53; al-Minqarī 1982, p. 390; Ibn Manẓūr 1990, vol. 4, p. 174, entry ḤDR.

[72] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, vol. 2, p. 349.

> Those who bear the Throne,[73] and all who are round about it, hymn the praises of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe, (saying): Our Lord! Thou comprehendest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore forgive those who repent and follow Thy way. Ward off from them the punishment of hell.

The Imām explained as follows: The bearers of the Throne are eight in number, four of the ancients and four of the younger. The four ancients are Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The four younger are Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. According to Shīʿite belief the the expression "those who bear the Throne" refers to the Imāms, who are the bearers of true knowledge.[74]

6. *Conclusion*

The story of Noah and the Ark has been utilized in Shīʿite tradition at a number of levels for the purpose of demonstrating its own antiquity, reaching back, so it claims, thousands of years to the times of Noah. Furthermore, the Ark was constructed on the site of the mosque of Kūfa, the most hallowed spot on earth for Shīʿites. This is where the Ark began its journey and this is also where it touched the ground again at the end of its journey. The meaning of this claim for Shīʿites is that the sanctity of Kūfa is very ancient indeed, in fact so ancient that Noah himself was already aware of it.

The claim of Shīʿite antiquity is further enhanced in tradition by the incident concerning the passage of the Ark in Karbalāʾ, where it almost drowned, and where Noah is supposed to have lamented the death of Ḥusayn who was killed there. In addition, the Ark came to rest in Kūfa once more, providing yet another link for Shīʿites between the ancient tale of Noah and the sacred ground of Kūfa. Here is proof, according to Shīʿite belief, that this ground has been consecrated to prophets and Imāms since the earliest times. Furthermore, the tale as a whole can be seen as symbolizing the faith of Shīʿism: Just as Noah saved those of his followers who complied with his instructions, so the Shīʿite believers will be able to escape the torments awaiting sinners in the afterlife if they obey the instructions of their Imāms. It is thus not surprising that all twelve Shīʿite Imāms have become known as "life boats" (*safīnat al-najāt*), an appellation reminiscent of Noah's Ark (*safīnat Nūḥ*). Finally, the link between Noah and ʿAlī was strengthened even more by having both of them buried on the same location and by identifying both as bearers of the Throne.

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[73] For more on the Throne see Berque 1986, p. 661; on the seat of the Throne see Hurat, 1986, p. 509.

[74] al-Majlisī 1984, vol. 55, p. 19, no. 55; vol. 27, pp. 55; 97; vol. 35, pp. 99, 123; vol. 41, p. 99; al-Astarābādī p. 691; al-Qummī 1983, vol. 2, p. 383; Ibn Bābawayh 1983, p. 120.

SUMMARY

In this paper we analyze the place which Noah and his Ark occupy in Twelver Shīᶜa thought. The story of Noah's Ark was mobilized by Shīᶜite writers to demonstrate the antiquity of their creed which, so they claimed, went back many millennia, all the way to Noah. In this view Noah was in reality a Shīᶜite himself, as corroborated by traditions according to which Noah was aware of the sanctity of Kūfa, at the site of whose mosque he built and launched his Ark. When the Ark passed by Karbalāᵓ Noah is reported to have cursed the man who killed al-Ḥusayn b. ᶜAlī. Furthermore, in Shīᶜite opinion both Noah and ᶜAlī were buried in the same grave and both are among the Bearers of the Throne. We also discuss the connection between Noah and the Shīᶜite Imāms, and the reason why the latter are known as "lifeboats".

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The Role of the Lion in Miracles Associated with Shīʿite Imāms[1]

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Introduction

Our aim in this paper is to provide a typology and analysis of the roles lions play in miracles associated with Twelver Shīʿite Imams.[2] The topic merits scholarly attention for two reasons. First of all, the number of miraculous occurrences associated with Shīʿite Imāms in which lions play a role is considerable, absolutely and relatively; secondly, the subject of miracles in Shīʿism has so far not been treated exhaustively in the scholarly literature. To the best of my knowledge only three papers have been published on the matter: Amir-Moezzi (2000) contains a survey of miracles ascribed to Twelver Shīʿite Imāms;[3] Kohlberg (2001) is devoted in part to miracles ascribed to Imāms in which lions play a role;[4] another relevant paper is Loebenstein (2003), which discusses miracles attributed to the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765).[5]

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[1]) I am deeply grateful to Professor Joseph Sadan and Professor George Kanazi and Dr. Aviva Broshi for their comments on a previous draft of this study.

[2]) In this paper the words "Shīʿite" and "Shīʿism" refer to Twelver Shīʿism throughout.

[3]) Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Savoir c'est pouvoir. Exégèses et implications du miracle dans l'imamisme ancien (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine, V)," in Denise Aigle, ed., *Miracle et karâma* (Turnhout, 2000), 251–86.

[4]) Etan Kohlberg, "Vision and the Imams," in Eric Chaumont, Denise Aigle, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Pierre Lory, eds., *Autour du regard. Mélanges d'islamologie offerts à Daniel Gimaret* (Leuven, 2003), 125–57.

[5]) Judith Loebenstein, "Miracles in Šīʿī Thought: a Case-Study of the Miracles Attributed to Imam Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq," *Arabica* 50 (2003), 199–244. On Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Twelver Imām, see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, art. Djaʿfar al-Ṣādiq" in *EI*^{2}, II (1965), 374–75.

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The present paper is based in the main on the following compositions:

- *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt fī faḍāʾil āl Muḥammad* by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Farūkh al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/903).[6] Al-Ṣaffār was a contemporary of the tenth Imām, ʿAlī ībn Muḥammad al-Hādī (d. 254/868).[7] and the eleventh, Ḥasan al-Askarī (d. 260/874).[8] The book's value for the purposes of the present paper lies mainly in the fact that it contains some very early Shīʿite traditions.
- *Kitāb al-kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*[9] by Quṭb al-Dīn Saʿīd ibn Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177–78).[10] the teacher of Ibn Shahrāshūb. This is a composition devoted entirely to miracles associated with Imāms.
- *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*[11] by Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192). Ibn Shahrāshūb was reputed to have been the greatest Shīʿite scholar of his time and was held in high esteem by Sunnīs as well. The work consists of biographies of Imāms; some of the chapters devoted to each Imām deal with the miracles associated with him.
- *Biḥār al-anwār*[12] by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1598), [13] who lived in Iṣfahān and spent the larger part of his life collecting Shīʿite traditions. In the year 1686 Persia's Ṣafawid ruler appointed him *shaykh al-islām* of Iṣfahām, a position of authority that enabled him to do much to further the cause of Twelver Shīʿism. The book in question consists of traditions gleaned from many different sources and historical periods, including the first three books listed above, providing us with an opportunity to compare different versions of traditions that appear in more than one of the compositions.

6) For details see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (m. 290/902–3) et son *Kitāb Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt*," *Journal asiatique* 280 (1992), 223–24.

7) Cf. Dwight M. Donaldon, *The Shiʿite Religion: a History of Islam in Persia and Iraq* (London, 1933), 209–16.

8) For details see Bernard Lewis, art. "al-Askarī, Abū l-Ḥasan" in *EI*², VII (1993), 443.

9) On this work see Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa* (Najaf, 1936–48/Tehran, 1941–78), VII, 145–46.

Below we have classified traditions in which lions play a significant role into four groups, using as our main criterion the nature of the miraculous deed and, as a secondary consideration, also the chronological order of the Imāms in question, wherever that has been feasible. Whenever a number of different traditions repeat one and the same story without adding anything of importance to the report of the miracle itself or to the powers ascribed to the Imām, we have relegated the reference to the footnotes, while a small number have not been mentioned at all.

In what follows we shall describe and analyze miracles associated with Shīʿite Imāms in which lions play a major role, and attempt to answer the following questions:

- What kinds of miracles involve lions as a significant element?
- What are the characteristics of the lion in these miracles?
- What roles do lions play in the miracles in question?
- What are the characteristics of the Imāms in these miracles?

Before discussing these points let us briefly survey what the classical Arabic sources have to say about lions.

Lions in Classical Arabic Sources

Not many works have been written about lions. However, our examination has revealed that this animal has received considerable attention in classical Arab culture, as attested by the very many mentions of it, beginning in the pre-Islamic period (*Jāhilīya*), which ended with Muḥammad's successful career in the seventh century CE.

The lion occupies pride of place in Arabic poetry, the main literary genre of classical Arabic literature; many poetry collections contain descriptions of animals, and in particular of lions. The lion is also mentioned in traditions quoting the Prophet, in the Qurʾān, and in Arabic fables.

But why the lion more than other animals? It would appear that Shīʿite writers showed a preference for the lion as the largest of the land predators, "king of the beasts", a symbol of power and authority, or pride and beauty, an animal with a fearful roar and senses that are superior to those of man. Shīʿite writers anthropomorphized the lion and placed it next to the Imāms themselves. Its power and courage were mobilized to compel obedience and loyalty to the Imāms, to serve them, to protect them from enemies and to punish anyone who dared to call into question their right to their office.

Lions in Shīʿite literature are deemed to have occult knowledge; they reveal this to the Imāms in speech, which the Imām understands. The lion serves as the Imām's mount, enabling him to travel great distances in a short time. The Imām uses the lion for difficult and dangerous missions; the lion is the Imām's friend and is always ready to do his bidding. At times the lion is even described as behaving like an Imām. The Imām can turn a picture of a lion into a real one in order to prove to doubters that he is indeed the true Imām, and also in order to take vengeance on his enemies.

In fact, even when the Imām's enemies bring a lion in the hope that it will pounce on him, the lion identifies the Imām as such and not only refuses to harm him, but also befriends him and wishes him well. The lion wags its tail in joy at having met the Imām. In short, the lion guards and protects the Imām during the latter's lifetime and guards his grave after his death.

The lion thus serves to stress the importance of the principle of loyalty to the Imām (*walāya*); all who refuse to express such loyalty are punished. The deeds performed by the lion – serving the Imām, obeying his orders, bringing and guarding his treasures, taking the Imām quickly over long distances, protecting the Imām and his property – provide support for the principle of *walāya*.

In stories of miracles associated with Shīʿite Imāms, the symbol of the lion developed into an important means for punishing whoever refuses to give his allegiance to the Imām and for expressing the ideas of serving and protecting the Imām. A clear trend can be discerned of a desire to combat those who refuse to see in loyalty to the Imām a cultural value and ideal; the constant threats that Shīʿism had to face aroused a feeling of insecurity that encouraged the development of values of individual heroism and courage.

Shīʿite believers' feelings of insecurity increased during the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods. The generations of uncertainty created a need for even greater support for and cultural loyalty towards the Imām, and prepared the ground for the emergence of stories about miracles and heroic deeds. As a rsult, earlier traditions about lions, derived from classical sources and even other cultural and ethnic groups, were transformed to serve the Shīʿites' social and cultural need to foster values of heroism and a belief in the Imāms' ability to perform miracles. In times of crisis and when feeling at a loss Shīʿites protected their existence and their values by mobilizing various genres in which lions played a prominent role, to answer their need for heroic deeds in the face of internal and external threats. Such traditions survived for many centuries, proof that they did indeed answer a real need. The transmitters of these traditions hold dis-

tinct social, religious, or political interests and adapt the traditions they relate to the public towards which they are aimed.

It would seem that every geo-cultural region in the world has at one time or another during its historical cultural development chosen one particular animal out of those that existed in the area in question and created around it literary and folkloristic genres, ascribing to it various natural and supernatural characteristics. Thus the fox occupies an important position in Indian, African and European folklore and the wolf and bear in Europe, in ancient Greece and Egypt as well as in Arab culture in general; among Shīʿites in particular the lion was pre-eminent.

The Imām as Miracle-Worker

The ability to perform miracles is one of an Imām's distinguishing characteristics. In the view of Twelver Shīʿism miracles constitute proof that the person performing them is indeed a true Imām, deserving to be ranked as an equal to the prophets. Shīʿites, however, stop short of claiming that their Imāms are in fact prophets; nor do they contest Muḥammad's claim to have been the last of the prophets. So in order to be able to ascribe miracles (*muʿjizāt*) to the Imāms they were forced to cut the connection, insisted upon by Sunnīs, between miracles and prophecy. This they do by claiming that the purpose of miracles is not to prove that the person performing them is a prophet, but merely to prove any truthful assertion. Thus whereas prophetic miracles prove that a person is a prophet, Imāmic miracles prove the truth of the miracle-worker's claim to the Imāmate. Even those who did not view miracles as a necessary means for proving the identity of an Imām did not dispute the fact that Imāms did indeed perform miracles. According to this view, what distinguishes the prophet is his performance of miracles to prove his claim to prophecy, and not his miracle-performing powers themselves. This line of argument has enabled Shīʿism to ascribe the power to perform miracles to its Imāms without detracting from the unique status of the prophets.

Imāms also possess a number of other superhuman qualities that are not and cannot be found in anyone except ʿAlī and his Imām descendents from his wife Fāṭima. In the Shīʿite view these attributes are God's gift to a chosen few, picked out before heaven and earth were created. The Imāms are role models for the believers; they are immune from mistakes and sin; their position as leaders of the community makes them the successors of Muḥammad, the only difference between them being that the latter was a prophet, i.e. that unlike them he was the recipient of direct

revelation in the form of visual and verbal communication with an angel (Gabriel in particular).[14]

The adoration of Imāms is naturally strongest among the Shīʿite masses, among whom beliefs abound about the wondrous abilities of their spiritual leaders: the Imāms are believed to speak all languages, to be able to communicate with animals, demons and plants; they can see what is behind them; they are able to heal and bring the dead back to life. Miracles are performed to convince those who refuse to swear fealty to the Imām.[15] Following this trend, Twelver Shīʿite hagiography has tended, as the Imāms physical presence receded even more from the believers' everyday live, to inflate their spiritual prowess and their miracle-working abilities.[16]

The miracles that an Imām can perform are of many different kinds: to revive the dead, speak to the dead, split a sea (or a river), transform one thing into another, reduce distances, speak to animals, plants and inanimate objects, heal deformities, bear hunger and thirst for a long time, see to very great distances and more. God protects Imāms from their enemies; they can make a small amount of food suffice to feed many people; they can appear under different guises and be in a number of places at one and the same time; animals obey them and God fulfils their requests. As we mentioned above, lions guarded some Imāms and some also rode on these wild beasts.

The eighth century CE saw the beginning of a tremendous outpouring of Arabic literary compositions after Arab culture had assimilated elements of the civilizations that had joined Islam. These intercultural transformations enriched Arab culture in the fields of science and philosophy following the translation into Arabic of major works of science from Greek and Persian. At this stage a literary-philosophical genre developed of compositions about animals, demonstrating the importance they possessed in Arab culture. Animals were perceived by Arabs as providing proof of the Creator's unlimited wisdom. Numerous Qurʾānic verses deal with animals and speak about man's superiority to them and human

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[14]) See Etan Kohlberg, "Shīʿa: ʿAlī's Faction," B, in *Protest and Revolution in Shīʿī Islam* (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 15 [Hebrew]; Meir Bar-Asher, *Issues in Early Twelver Shīʿite Qurʾān Interpretation*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Hebrew University (Jerusalem, 1991), 139 [Hebrew]; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shīʿism: the Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David Streight (New York, 1994), 69–71, 91–94; Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī, *Naẓarīyat al-imāma ladā al-shīʿa al-ithnay ʿasharīya* (Cairo, 1969), 169.

[15]) Bar-Asher, *Issues*, 139.

[16]) *Ibid*.

control of them. The literature about animals drew from many varied sources, such as classical Arabic poetry, the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* literature, as well as animal stories from other cultures that had been translated into Arabic, including in particular Aristotle's essays on animals that had been translated from Greek into Arabic.

Everyday life in the Arabian peninsula afforded constant contact with animals. These interactions caused the inhabitants to ascribe to each animal certain specific characteristics. The lion occupied an important position in the classical sources presented below, which provide detailed descriptions of the animal and its distinguishing features. Among these sources are the following:

- Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/729), *Tafsīr al-aḥlām al-kabīr*
- Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 142/759), *Kalīla wa-Dimna*
- al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213(828), *Asmāʾ al-wuḥūsh wa-ṣifātuhā*
- al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*
- Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), *Kitāb al-maʿānī al-kabīr fī abyāt al-maʿānī*
- al-Khwārizmī (d. 381/992), *Mufīd al-ʿulūm wa-mubīd al-humūm*
- al-Maydānī (d. 518/1124), *Majmaʿ al-amthāl*
- al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt*
- Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), *Lisān al-ʿarab*
- al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405), *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*
- al-Ibshīhī (d. 870/1466), *al-Mustaṭraf min kull fann mustaẓraf*

In classical Arabic sources lions are given numerous names and epithets. For example, in al-Aṣmaʿī's *Asmāʾ al-wuḥūsh wa-ṣifātuhā*, dedicated to the names, sounds and characteristics of animals, one will find many names for the lion. The many names and epithets of the lion (500 according to some, 1000 according to others)[17] are indicative of that beast's nature and behavior.

Still, most classical works use the common noun for lion in Arabic, *asad*, and mention other names and epithets only as additional words denoting the same animal. Most of these names are masculine, evidence of a positive attitude in Arab culture towards the animal to which the names

[17]) See Joseph Hell, art. "Asad" in *EI*[1], I (1927), 474. In the Old Testament there are six distinct words for the lion (*ari, aryeh, kefir, lavi, layish, shaḥal*); for further details see L. I. Rabinowitz, art. "Lion" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York and London, n. d.), 262; M. M. Kaplan, *The Lion in the Hebrew Bible: a Study of a Biblical Metaphor*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis (Brandeis University, 1981), 20–114.

refer, at least according to the hypothesis that the Arabic language and Arab culture favor males and the masculine gender. Another interesting feature of the names is that many of them have the structure *abū* + noun, identical to the common Arabic agnomen consisting of the word *abū*, "father of …", and the first-born son's name. Among such names for the lion are the following: Abū l-Ḥārith, Abū l-Shibl, Abū l-Ashbāl, Abū Ḥafṣ Abū l-Zaʿfarān, Abū l-ʿAbbās, Abū l-Firās, Abū l-Abṭāl and others.

These agnomina are identical with those used for humans; in Arabic such forms are quite commonly used to indicate certain personal qualities of the epithets' possessors. Their use as names of lions is evidence of a tendency by humans to personify the lion.[18] Arabs in antiquity adored animals, occasionally deified them, and frequently spoke about them. Names of animals were often used as personal or tribal names out of fear, admiration or a wish to acquire some of their character traits, such as strength, courage, cunning, and even beauty.

Small wonder, then, that Shīʿites show respect for the lion, hang pictures of lions inside their homes, and even place two statues of lions over the house entrance in the belief that these will protect them and their families and prevent evil spirits from entering their homes.[19] The pair of

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[18]) Robertson Smith was of the opinion that like other Semitic peoples, the Arabs used animal names out of a belief in totemism, the worship of animals believed to be the tribe's original forefathers and possessed of the spirit of a deity. He also ascribes to the Arabs the belief that human souls can be transformed into animal spirits and *vice versa*. One piece of evidence he adduces for his claims is that many Arab tribes are called by the name of a totem animal, including the lion (*asad*). He furthermore argues that early Arab society was matriarchal, and that the commonly accepted genealogy of the Arab tribes that goes back to Ishmael and Qaḥṭān is relatively recent, dating apparently from the first/seventh century. For further details see William Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (Cambridge, repr. 1966), 231.

[19]) A pair of lions over the entrance to Shīʿite houses is but the last link in an extremely long chain of "Oriental" lions, many of which possess common stylistic elements. In antiquity their function was to express the king's prestige and dignity (*hayba*) and also to protect him and prevent evil spirits from gaining entrance to the palace or temple. This is the reason for their fierce appearance. This function of theirs is described in an eighth-century bce inscription from Tel Barsip in Mesopotamia. The lions at Parthian Warqa, and most probably those at Tepe Hisar, also had the same function. Over the centuries the figure of the guardian lion over the gate became a cliché. For further details see H. Targan, *Umayyad Sculpture at Khirbat al-Mafjar: Sources and Meanings*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Tel-Aviv University (Tel-Aviv, 1992), I, 191 [Hebrew].

fierce-looking lions usually stands sideways, with large heads facing the visitor, mouths open and showing two prominent lower fangs. The manes look like intertwined snakes separated by deep incisions.

In Shīʿite art, too, lions appear more often than any other animal. Some also put the statue of a lion on tombstones. It is thus no coincidence that the lion with sword is the symbol of the emergency medical service ("Red Cross") in Iran.[20] Nor is it merely chance that many Shīʿites call their sons by names that mean "lion", including Ḥaydar, after a first name of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib,[21] also called Asad Allāh, "lion of God".[22] ʿAlī was known for his great courage and his fierce battle cries, which sounded like a lion's roar and instilled fear in the hearts of the enemy.[23] This may

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[20]) The lion and sword have been the political symbol of Persia from Sāsānid times (226–640 CE) until the overthrow of Shah Muḥammad Riḍā Pahlevī in 1979. After the Islamic Revolution Iranian clerics gave this symbol a new meaning: the sword now symbolized ʿAlī's sword *dhū l-fiqār*, and the lion became the lion of Karbalāʾ that guarded Ḥusayn's body and prevented the Umayyad troops from desecrating it after his murder. I am grateful to Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāssī for this information, which he was kind enough to provide when I called him in London on 29 April 2002.

[21]) The following story is told about why ʿAlī was called Ḥaydara. One day ʿAmr ibn Maʿdī Karib al-Sulamī (d. 21/642), who had heard of ʿAlī's prowess, wanted to challenge him to a duel. ʿAmr came to Medina and encountered ʿAlī while the latter was plowing. ʿAmr did not recognize him and so asked him where he could find ʿAlī. The latter replied: "The man whom you seek has a physique very much like mine." When ʿAmr expressed his scorn ʿAlī gave a great roar and ʿAmr fell off his horse to the ground. After he rose he said to ʿAlī: "I swear by God that you are indeed Ḥaydara; this I do not doubt," and then asked to become his servant. According to one tradition ʿAlī's servant Qanbar was none other than the afore-mentioned ʿAmr.

[22]) In Sunnī Islam the epithet "lion of God" belongs to Ḥamza ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 4/626), who demonstrated great heroism in the wars against the Prophet's enemies. It is related that in the Battle of Badr in 2/624 Ḥamza shouted out to the non-believers: "I am the lion of God; I am the lion of the Messenger of God, the Prophet Muḥammad." To this ʿUtba ibn Rabīʿa (d. 2/624) responded: "I am the lion of the allies who fight against the Prophet Muḥammad." For details on Ḥamza's epithet see, for example, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Ismāʿīl al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb fī muḍāf wa-l-mansūb*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 21.

[23]) H. Kinderman, art. "al-Asad" in *EI*², I (1960), 681–83. In his dictionary *Lisān al-ʿarab* Ibn Manẓūr relates that Fāṭima, the mother of ʿAlī, called him Ḥaydara because of her prior divine knowledge about his future prowess. He adds that she may also have called him "Lion" in memory of her father, whose name was Asad (also meaning "lion").

At the battle of Khaybar ʿAlī is reported to have approached a group of the enemy and declaimed the following three lines in *rajaz* verse:

also explain why in the plays and parades held on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ (the anniversary of the death of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī[24]) lion-like dolls are held and carried by the marchers.

In Shīʿite mosques and *ḥusaynīya*s[25] Qurʾānic verses and sayings ascribed to the Imāms are inscribed on the walls in calligraphic imitation of a lion. Fresco paintings depicting lions are well-known among Shīʿites as well, as also are pictures of lions in manuscripts. On the graves of important Shīʿite clerics in Iran one can also occasionally find the statute of a lion[26] in the Sāsānid tradition.[27]

I am ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib; [in my cradle] my mother called me Ḥaydara.

I am [courageous] like the lion of the forest;

I shall smite them a hero's blows with my sword.

For further details see Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī, *Lisān al-ʿarab* (Beirut, 1990), IV, 174 *s. v. ḥaydar*; also Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, III, 276.

In Jewish tradition Moses is described as being heroic like a lion; see, for example, Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia, 1909–38), III, 335. Ahasuerus was called a lion by Esther as well; *ibid.*, IV, 472. The Shīʿites may well have taken the epithet of "lion" from Jewish traditions about Moses and applied it to ʿAlī with the necessary changes in order to ascribe to the latter the characteristics and prowess of a prophet.

[24]) The third Shīʿite Imām, son of ʿAlī, killed at the battle of Karbalāʾ in 61/680. See Laura Veccia Vaglieri, art. "Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib" in *EI*[2], IV (1990), 607–15.

[25]) The *ḥusaynīya*s are meeting halls where Shīʿites congregate on the anniversary of the death of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī. They are to be found mainly in the major Shīʿite holy cities, such as Karbalāʾ and Najaf (both in Iraq), Mashhad and Qumm (in Iran), and elsewhere. They also serve as hostels for the pilgrims to Shīʿite shrines, in particular in the cities of Karbalāʾ and Najaf. They are frequently named after the place of origin of those who financed their construction, e. g. Ḥusaynīyat al-iṣfāhānīyīn, "Hostel of the People of Iṣfāhān". The purity laws of mosques do not apply to *ḥusaynīya*s.

The origin of the *ḥusaynīya*s may lie in the fact that initially mosques were under the control of of anti-Shīʿite rulers who prevented Shīʿites from openly performing their rites and ceremonies.

*Ḥusaynīya*s are called by a number of different names in India: "Imam Barch", "al-Takīya", "Gharkhāna", and so on; in Central Asia they are called "Shīʿite mosques". For further details see, for example, Jawād Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿāshūrāʾ*, trans. Khalīl Zāmil al-ʿIṣāmī (Beirut, 1997), 142–43.

[26]) I would like to thank Dr. Ismāʿīl Shafaq from the Abū ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā University in Iran for clarifying these points. In an interview Dr. Shafaq gave in Tunis on 8 April 2002 he explained that he believed the lion to symbolize God overpowering injustice.

[27]) See n. 19 above.

Lions play an important part in Shīʿite literature, in particular in descriptions of miracles performed by Imāms, in life and also after death. Below we shall survey the various traditions involving lions and Imāms' miracles, as follows:

- Language and speech
- Prophecies of Ḥusayn's death and weeping over his grave
- The lion as mount and pack animal
- Pictures of lions that produce real beasts
- Repelling, cursing and killing of the Imām's enemies

Language and Speech

It is related that al-Ḥārith al-Aʿwar[28] said:

> We were a number of people with the Commander of the Faithful[29] ʿAl ī ibn Abī Ṭālib[30] in a place called al-Kunāsa[31] when suddenly a lion came out of a nearby wood. The people who saw the lion ran every which way. The lion approached and stood before ʿAl ī, who placed his hand on the lion's head, between his ears, and said to him: "Return to your place with the permission of God, and from this day on do not enter the *dār al-hijra*." ʿAl ī then added: "Tell all the lions in my name that they must not come to or enter the city of al-Kūfa." When ʿAl ī finished speaking the lion departed and disappeared.[32]

In this tradition the lion recognizes ʿAl ī and approaches him, but does not attack; ʿAl ī exhibits no fear, caresses the lion's mane and speaks to it; the lion understands what ʿAl ī says and obeys him. The lion here possesses

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[28]) For details on him see Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī* (Tehran, 1994), 94; al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn ʿAl ī ibn al-Muṭṭahar, known as al-Allāma al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī* (Qumm, 1990), 54 no. 8; Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Az īz al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, ed. Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī (Mashhad, 1929), 88–89 nos. 142–43.

[29]) One of the titles of a caliph, emphasizing his military functions. According to traditional accounts it came into being during the caliphate of the second caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44), and quickly became the most commonly used title for caliphs. However, in Shīʿite usage it refers exclusively to ʿAl ī, never to ʿUmar.

[30]) On him see Laura Veccia Vaglieri, art. "Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib" in *EI*^{2}, I (1960), 381–86; Ismael K. Poonawala, art. "Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib" in *EIr*, I (1985), 642.

[31]) The name of a locality in al-Kūfa; see Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut, 1979), IX, 481 *s. v.* "Kunāsa".

[32]) Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ* (Qumm, 1988), I, 191–92.

both animal and human traits. ʿAlī's ability to understand the lion and make both beast and humans do his bidding enable him to serve in a sense as a mediator between the two worlds of men and beasts. From this and other traditions of this kind we also learn that it is not only humans who are duty-bound to obey the Imām.

In another tradition al-Barqī[33] reports that a lion once entered the city of al-Kūfa and spoke to its people, demanding: "Please guide me and take me to ʿAlī, Commander of the Faithful." The frightened Kūfans led the lion to ʿAlī. The lion approached him, stared at him, ran towards him and demonstrated his desire to be protected by him. ʿAlī caressed it, patted its back, and then said: "Leave!", whereupon the lion lowered its head, raised its tail to its neck and left the city without a sideways look.[34] As in the preceding tradition the lion here is given human traits: it speaks to the people of al-Kūfa, understands their answer, identifies ʿAlī, recognizes him as the Imām and as his superior, and makes it possible for ʿAlī to perform a wonder.

The following tradition, reported by Rashīd ibn Mazyad,[35] has a lion informing the Imām Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī on the extent of the support he has among the people of al-Kūfa: "I accompanied Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī and his men[36] when they left Medina on their way to al-Kūfa in Iraq. When we came to a place called Quṭquṭāna[37] near al-Kūfa I asked Ḥusayn to be

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[33]) His full name is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Barqī. See al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 384; Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, ed. Muḥammad Jawād al-Naʾīnī (Qumm, 1986), 86 no. 182; Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Tehran, 1963), 58–59.

[34]) al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, I, 198. Similar traditions are found in Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, IV, 236, 288, 303–304. See also al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XVII, 412; XLI, 231; Ḥasan ibn Abī Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb* (Qumm, 1991), II, 277.

[35]) I have not been able to identify this person.

[36]) In Shīʿite writings the companions of Ḥusayn on his journey from the Ḥijāz to Karbalāʾ are called *aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn*, the "comrades of Ḥusayn", consisting of 82 women, 60 small children and 72 men, all family members or close friends. See, for example, ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿAlī Dukhayyil, *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn ʿalayhi al-salām* (Beirut, 1985); also Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Samāwī, *Ibṣār al-ʿayn fī anṣār al-Ḥusayn* (Qumm, n. d.); al-Faḍīl ibn Zubayr ibn ʿUmar al-Kūfī al-Asadī, *Tasmiyat man qutila maʿa Ḥusayn*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm, 1406/1985), 127–62.

[37]) The name of a place near al-Kūfa, towards the desert, in a region known as al-Ṭaff, site of a prison built by king al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir (d. 312 CE). See Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, IV, 374.

allowed to return to Medina. He gave me permission, and then I saw a fierce lion coming from the direction of al-Kūfa and welcoming Ḥusayn, who spoke to it and asked it whether the people of al-Kūfa supported his claim to be caliph. The lion replied to him: "The hearts of the people of al-Kūfa are with you, but their swords are against you."[38]

Ḥusayn then asks the lion: "Whom did you leave behind in [charge of] al-Kūfa?" The lion replies: "ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād (d. 67/686)[39] rules al-Kūfa now and has already killed your cousin Muslim ibn ʿAqīl (d. 61/580)."[40] Ḥusayn goes on to ask: "Where are you headed?," and the lion answers: "To the city of Aden in Yemen." Ḥusayn then turns to a more immediate issue: "Oh lion, do you know how we may approach the Euphrates River next to al-Kūfa?" The lion replies: "I know nothing that you do not know, for all the knowledge that we lions possess comes from you; you are the one who has provided us with it." The lion thereupon leaves Ḥusayn and continues on its way, reciting the Qur'ānic verse: "And thy Lord is not at all a tyrant to His slaves."[41] Ḥusayn then says: "This is indeed a wonder, a miracle performed by God's friend, the son of God's friend."[42]

This tradition bear's a number of noteworthy features: a chance encounter between the lion and the Imām, a dialogue in which both sides understand each other, and finally, Ḥusayn's request for help in finding the Euphrates River.

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[38]) According to another tradition the incident involved the poet al-Farazdaq (Hammām ibn Ghālib, d. 115/733). In this version again Ḥusayn and his men were on their way from the Ḥijāz to Iraq, and when they encountered the poet along the way, one of Ḥusayn's men, al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāḥi (d. 61/680), asked what the people of Iraq thought about Ḥusayn's claim to the caliphate. To this al-Farazdaq answered: "The hearts of the people of Iraq are with you, but their swords are against you." It would thus appear that later Shīʿite writers took the kernel of this story and added the lion in order to stress Ḥusayn's supernatural abilities, one of which was his ability to communicate with beasts. For details about the encounter between Ḥusayn and al-Farazdaq, see, for example, Abū Mikhnaf Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, *Maqtal Ḥusayn* (Tehran, n. d.).

[39]) Governor of al-Baṣra during the reign of Muʿāwiya; later the caliph Yazīd appointed him to the post of governor of al-Kūfa. See Etan Kohlberg, art. "ʿUbayd Allād ibn Ziyād" in *EI*², XI (2000), 763–64.

[40]) For details on him see Etan Kohlberg, art. "Muslim ibn ʿAqīl" in *EI*², VII (1993), 688–91.

[41]) Q. 41:46.

[42]) Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustum al-Ṭabarī al-Ṣaghīr, *Dalā'il al-imāma* (Qumm, 1992), 182.

Prophecies of Ḥusayn's Death and Weeping over His Grave

A number of traditions[43] tell of a lion who predicts the future death of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī. In one such tale it is related that Jesus used to walk in forests and deserts with his disciples, fasting and worshipping God. One day he and his disciples arrived in Karbalā,[44] where they were surprised by a lion lying in the middle of the road. The lion bared his teeth and showed his enmity towards them but did not roar. Jesus then asked the lion: "Why do you prevent us from passing?", whereupon the lion answered in clear human language: "I will not let you pass until you curse Yazīd,[45] the murderer of Ḥusayn." Jesus then asked the lion: "Who is this Ḥusayn?", and the lion answered: "His killer is cursed; the wild beasts, lions and wolves in particular, curse him on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ."[46] Jesus then raised his hands to heaven and cursed Yazīd, whereupon the lion moved out of the way and allowed Jesus and his disciples to continue on their way.[47]

In this tale a lion with human characteristics knows the ultimate fate awaiting Ḥusayn; in a sense he is the guardian of the place where the Imām will eventually be killed and buried. The lion, who asks prophets and messengers to curse the future murderers, speaks the language of human beings, knows the future, and recognizes Jesus as a prophet. His peaceful behavior towards the latter is another example of the idea that lions are the friends of God and do not attack prophets, Imāms or saints; to the contrary, they will always defend members of this group against their enemies. This tradition presents the killing of Ḥusayn as a

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[43]) For details on this tradition see (al-Fāḍil al-Dardabandī)Āghā ibn ʿĀbid al-Shīrawānī al-Ḥāʾirī, *Iksīr al-ʿibādāt fī asrār al-shahādāt, al-maqtal al-mulimm bi-maʾsāt al-Ḥusayn*, ed. Shaykh Muḥammad Jumʿa Bādī and ʿAbbās Mullā ʿAṭīya al-Jamrī (al-Manāma, Bahrayn, 1994), I, 267–68.

[44]) A town about 100 km southwest of Baghdad and the place where Ḥusayn was killed by the Umayyads. See Ernest Honigmann, art. "Karbalāʾ" in *EI*², VII (1993), 688–91.

[45]) The second Umayyad caliph (r. 60–63/680–83), son of the dynasty's founder Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. Ḥusayn was killed during his reign. See Gerald R. Hawting, art. "Yazīd (I) ibn Muʿāwiya" in *EI*², XI (2002), 309–11.

[46]) The tenth of the month of Muḥarram, the day when Ḥusayn would die. On ʿĀshūrāʾ see my article "ʿĀshūrāʾ Day and Yom Kippur," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 38 (2001), 200–11; Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (The Hague, 1978); P. H. Marçais, art. "ʿĀshūrāʾ" in *EI*², I (1960), 705.

[47]) See n. 41 above.

wrongful murder that had been fated to occur long before it actually happened.[48]

Jesus and his disciples are presented here in a positive light, as believers in the Shīʿite creed and in Ḥusayn's rightful position as Imām. The tradition itself is relatively late (the tenth century CE), but reflects a long-standing Shīʿite belief that Jesus, who lived many centuries before the event, was loyal to the Imām and cursed his killers. The tradition also serves to emphasize the antiquity of the idea of *walāya*, or loyalty to the Imām, which in this view goes back much further in time than the appearance of Shīʿism itself.[49]

This is not the only tradition emphasizing the antiquity of Shīʿite ideas. In fact, many Shīʿite writers provide evidence that the unlawful and unjust killing of Ḥusayn was an event that had been decreed even before Creation itself. This is part of a more general tendency to present proofs that various tenets of Shīʿite dogma had been recognized millennia before the appearance of Shīʿism. Thus, for example, the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 113/731)[50] is reported to have said that every prophet sent by God "was faithful to us (i. e. to the Twelver Shīʿite Imāms) and absolutely rejected our opponents."[51]

Another tradition tells of a lion that visited the tomb of the Imām ʿAlī in the city of al-Kūfa.[52] A group of people had gone out at night in order

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[48]) It is a commonplace in Shīʿite literature that Ḥusayn's martyrdom was known before Creation. See Khalil SINDAWI, *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Bar-Ilan University (Ramat Gan, 2000), 240–42 [Hebrew].

[49]) The idea of the antiquity of the duty of devotion (*walāya*) to the Imām is frequently expressed by Shīʿite writers. Many traditions state that when men were still "shadows" (*aẓilla*) they were already exhorted to express this devotion. Other traditions explain the disasters that befell various groups of people before the birth of Shīʿism as God's punishment for their refusal to pledge their allegiance to the Shīʿite Imāms, and in particular to ʿAlī. In fact, even Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden is explained by his refusal to swear fealty to the members of the "Sacred Five"; and Jonah was thrown into the sea and into the belly of the whale because he would not express loyalty to ʿAlī. For further details see, for example, BAR-ASHER, *Issues*, 171–73.

[50]) This is the fifth Imām in Twelver Shīʿism. See Etan KOHLBERG, art. "Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn" in *EI*^{2}, VIII (1993), 379–400.

[51]) See Hichem DJAIT, art. "al-Kūfa" in *EI*^{2}, V (1986), 345; Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūtchebāghī AL-TABRĪZĪ (Qumm, 1983), 72 tradition no. 1, 74 tradition nos. 1–2; also Meir BAR-ASHER, "The Banū Isrāʾīl as a Model for Shīʿism," *al-Karmal* 18–19 (1997–98), 57–58 [Arabic].

[52]) A city in southern Iraq; see DJAIT, "al-Kūfa."

to pay a clandestine visit to the tomb.[53] When they arrived some began reciting verses of the Qurʾān while others performed the *ziyāra* (pilgrimage) ceremonies. Suddenly a lion appeared before them. While they all cringed in a corner of the shrine the lion, whose feet were injured, approached the grave and rubbed his paws against it. After a while the lion departed, his wounds healed, and the pilgrims resumed their worship.[54]

In this story we see again some of the elements already discussed with respect to the previous tradition: a lion that does not attack humans and that reveres the Imām and recognizes the latter's power to heal even after death.

Weeping over the Imām Ḥusayn[55]

In the following tradition a member of the Banū Asad tribe[56] is reported to have said: "When Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī and his men were killed at Karbalāʾ, and after the Umayyad troops had left the battlefield where Ḥusayn's body lay unburied, a lion would come every night from the direction of the *qibla* (the direction of prayer, the Kaʿba in Mecca), stand by the body all night and leave at dawn." One tribesman did not believe the story and went to Karbalāʾ to see for himself. As night fell he saw the lion approach the body and weep over it; the lion would wipe its head and face

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53) Throughout the entire Umayyad period (41–132/661–750) and for most of the ʿAbbāsid period as well, Shīʿites were forbidden to visit ʿAlī's shrine and pilgrimages were of necessity clandestine. See Khalid Sindawi, "The Two Ghariyy Towers in Kūfa and the Tomb of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Shīʿite Literature," *al-Karmal* 23–24 (2003), 129–30 [Arabic].

54) See al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, II, 436.

55) In the *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* literature various beasts (Ḥusayn's steed, whales, animals in the desert) weep for Ḥusayn; birds mourned and did not eat on the day of his death, pigeons cursed his murderers, and owls have not shown themselves in daylight since that day. The idea of nature mourning over the death of a god, prophet, king or imam is a common motif in popular literature. The ancient Babylonians wrote many poems mourning the death of Tammuz in which nature is described as dying as well, and in Greek mythology, in which Tammuz is replaced by Adonis, it is told that with the latter's death nature died and dried up as well. In Ḥusayn's case it would appear that beasts were "mobilized" as a means of stressing his sublime character. For more on the motif of animals weeping over Ḥusayn, see Sindawi, *Maqātil*, 208–10.

56) On the tribe of the Banū Asad, see Werner Caskel, art. "Asad" in *EI*², I (1960), 683–84.

in Ḥusayn's blood and roar;[57] voices were also heard from underground. The narrator then added: "These voices were none other than those of demons' wives weeping over Ḥusayn's death." He spoke to the demons' wives and said to them: "There is a lion sitting next to Ḥusayn's body." The wives answered that they saw the lion, and they asked the narrator if he knew who the lion was. He said that he did not know, whereupon they said: "This lion is Ḥusayn's father, ʿAlī son of Abū Ṭālib, who is embodied in the form of a lion."[58]

The lion in this tradition has received the appellation *asad Karbalā'*, "the lion of Karbalā'", perhaps as a reminder that this site has been consecrated since Creation because of Ḥusayn's future passion, and that God placed the lion there in remote antiquity to prevent anyone, be he even a prophet, from passing through without cursing the future murderer(s) of Ḥusayn. This tradition is the source of the Shīʿite custom of performing plays in which the story of Ḥusayn's death is retold on the Day of ʿĀshūrā'; for these celebrations large lion-shaped dolls are made and many wear lion masks and/or clothes in the color of a lion's skin, as a reminder of the role that a lion played on the day of Ḥusayn's death.[59]

Guarding Ḥusayn's Corpse

It is related that after Ḥusayn's death the commander of the Umayyad forces ordered his troops to trample on Ḥusayn's body with their horses' hooves. At that moment a woman by the name of Faḍḍa al-Nūbīya,[60] the

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[57]) This tradition appears in other sources as well, with some changes in the details. See, for example, Muḥammad Taqī Safar, *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh* (Tehran, 1889), IV, 23.

[58]) Fāḍil al-Dardabandī quotes al-Ṭabṭabā'ī's assertion that this tradition was patently false and that it is inconceivable that Shīʿite scholars would disseminate a story in which ʿAlī appears in the form of a lion, a beast of prey unsuited to represent the image of a man, the most sublime and beautiful of creations, as proven by the Qur'ānic verse (95:4): "We have indeed created man in the best of moulds." See al-Dardabandī, *Iksīr al-ʿibādāt*, III, 156 n. 2.

[59]) See, for example, Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿāshūrā'*, 40.

[60]) The servant woman of the Prophet's daughter was a beautiful black woman, famous for her elegant sermons. A tradition reports that the Prophet taught her the following incantation: "He is the One, none is like Him, no one; You make all perish and destroy every one; there is none beside You; You sit on Your throne; You never sleep." Faḍḍa used this incantation to perform various difficult deeds. One tradition relates that Fāṭima sent her to collect wood in the forest;

servant of Fāṭima,[61] who was with Ḥusayn's wives, sisters and aunts, approached Zaynab and said to her: "My lady, I can call a lion to protect the body of Ḥusayn from the Umayyad soldiers. The Prophet Muḥammad taught me a call that will enable me to summon a lion forthwith." Zaynab gave her permission to do so. Faḍḍa then went to a nearby forest[62] and spoke with a lion, who proceeded to Ḥusayn's body, lay his paws on it, smeared his head with his blood and cried. He remained thus until dawn. When the Umayyad army came on the next day, headed by Ibn al-Akhnas,[63] and approached Ḥusayn's body, they saw the lion and fled in terror.[64]

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since the wood she collected was too heavy for her to carry, she pronounded the incantation taught to her by the Prophet and a man of Bedouin origin came along and carried the wood for her to Fāṭima's house. Another case is the one reported here in the text: Faḍḍa used the incantation to call the lion that protected Ḥusayn's body from the Umayyad troops. For further details see Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Aʿlamī al-Ḥāʾirī, *Tarājim aʿlām al-nisāʾ* (Beirut, 1987), 363–67; also Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī (Beirut, 1992), VIII, 75.

61) The Prophet's daughter and ʿAlī's wife. See Laura Veccia Vaglieri, art. "Fāṭima" in *EI*², II (1965), 841–50.

62) Another tradition relates that ʿAlī's daughter Zaynab was the one who went to Ibn Saʿd's troops and that she called the lion to come and guard Ḥusayn's body. See al-Dardabandī, *Iksīr al-ʿibādāt*, III, 147; Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (Tehran, 1945), I, 465.

63) There is some doubt as to his name. According to some sources it was al-Akhnas ibn Marthad, while others claim it was Marthad ibn ʿAlqama al-Ḥaḍramī. For further details see Raḍī l-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Mūsā Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Malhūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭulūf*, ed. Fāris Tabrīziyān "al-Ḥassūn" (Qumm, 1993), 56–58.

64) In the traditions recorded by Ibn Ṭāwūs there is no mention of a lion; indeed, he reports that Ḥusayn's body was trampled by ten men ordered to do so by ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, the Umayyad commander. See Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malhūf*, 56–58; al-Kulaynī, *Kāfī*, I, 465. To this day in Karbalāʾ there is a site called *maqām asad wa-Faḍḍa*, where the two supposedly met; a side road (*ʿiqd* in the local dialect) is called *ʿiqd Faḍḍa al-asad*, the "Faḍḍa and Lion Road". In past centuries many Shīʿite pilgrims to Karbalāʾ have reported being accosted by a lion that, after they had pronounced Faḍḍa's incantation, kept its distance from them and did them no harm. I would like to thank Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāssī for the information he provided in a telephone conversation from London on 29 April 2002.

The Lion as Mount and Pack Animal

Al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar[65] is quoted as the authority for a story reporting that the ʿAbbāsid caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr[66] sent the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq on a mission to the city of al-Kūfa. There the Imām met al-Mufaḍḍal and asked him to join him. Al-Mufaḍḍal agreed and the two of them decided to continue on their way after nightfall. When darkness fell and al-Mufaḍḍal came to the Imām they saw two lions standing in front of them. Al-Ṣādiq put his hands on his companion's eyes and tied something around them so that he would not see the Imām's miracle and report it, since this would put the Imām and his followers in danger. He then put him on the back of one of the lions and he rode the other one.[67] They rode all night, and in the morning they arrived at the home of al-Ṣādiq in Medina.[68]

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[65]) His full name was Abū ʿAbd Allāh (or Abū Muḥammad) al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿafī. He was a resident of al-Kūfa and according to some belonged to the *khaṭṭābīya* sect. See al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, II, 359–60.

[66]) The second ʿAbbāsid caliph, r. 136–58/754–75. On him see Hugh Kennedy, art. "al-Manṣūr" in *EI*², VI (1991), 427–28.

[67]) There is a venerable and oft-quoted saying in Arabic, *rākib al-asad*, "lion-rider", which is used to refer to a particularly respected person. It is quite possible, then, that the tradition about the Imām riding the lion uses this motif in order to convey the idea that the Imām deserves the respect of the people. For more on this saying and its usage, see al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb*, 383.

[68]) al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 269–70. The motif of riding on a lion can be found in tales about a number of popular heroes in Arabic literature. Here is one example, from a collection of tales about Zīr Sālim. Once upon a time a man named Kulayb, who was ill, asked al-Zīr Sālim to bring him water from the Well of Lions, since his physicians told him that in this way he would be healed. Al-Zīr acceded to his request and rode his ass to the Well of Lions. When he arrived there was only a single lion near the well; it was asleep and had its paw in its mouth. Al-Zīr said: "The lion is asleep. It would be cowardly of me to kill it now." So he tied his ass to the well and went down into the well to fill his water skin. While he was down in the well the ass brayed, waking the lion, which proceeded to pounce on the ass and eat it. When al-Zīr came out of the well and discovered what had happened he went up to the lion and swore to him that he would make him carry the water skins in place of the ass. The lion pounced on al-Zīr, but the latter struck the lion with his stick and threw him on the ground, approached him, put reins and a saddle on the beast, loaded his water skins and rode the lion back to his tribe. He then dismounted and cut the lion's head off with his sword. For details see *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim Abū Layla al-Muhalhal al-kabīr* (Beirut, n. d.), 39–40.

In this case the Imām hides the miracle he performs, in the spirit of wonders performed by saints. As we shall see, this is the only case of a miracle performed by an Imām in which a lion is involved and the wondrous deed is done at night and in secret. The Imām in this case wanted to hide the miracle from the public, as do saints performing *karāmāt* ("wonders"). This tradition thus contains an element of prudent dissimulation (*taqīya*).[69]

We should point out here that usually the miracles performed by Imāms are of the overt kind, called *muʿjiza*; in this respect the Imāms are held to be akin to prophets rather than to saints. Imāms and prophets, according to the Shīʿite view, perform *muʿjizāt* that can be observed by others in order to convince unbelievers or doubters; therefore they would be going against God's will if they hid these deeds. Saints, on the other hand, perform wonders (*karāmāt*) for the sake of God only, and exposing them to public view would be considered an act of self-aggrandizement running counter to God's wish. The difference between a miracle (*muʿjiza*) and a wonder (*karāma*) thus does not lie in the character of the deed, but only in whether or not the performer possesses the prophetic spirit. In Shīʿite writings the term *karāma* is therefore never used to describe a miracle performed by an Imām,[70] since Shīʿism considers its Imāms as indistinguishable from prophets.[71] In the present case, however, the Imām

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A later story about riding a lion concerns the famous Ṣūfī shaykh Muḥammad Ḥijāzī al-Asadī (d. 977/1569), who was born in Iraq but lived in Safed in the Galilee region of Palestine and fought against the Turks who conquered the land at the beginning of the sixteenth century under Sultan Selīm. The shaykh was on his way from Safed to the village of Dayr al-Biʿna. He stopped by a spring on the way and there a lion pounced on his ass and ate it. But the shaykh grabbed the lion and rode it to Dayr al-Biʿna. From that day he was called Muḥammad al-Asad and the name of the village became Dayr al-Asad.

According to Maḥmūd Ḥijāzī this story typifies the powers which Sufi shaykhs were believed to possess. Very probably the story originated with local people after the shaykh's death. For further details see Maḥmūd Ḥijāzī, *Maqām al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Asad*, MA thesis, Bar-Ilan University (Ramat-Gan, 1984), 22 [Hebrew].

69) For more on this principle, hiding one's true religious beliefs in times of danger, see R. Strothmann, art. "Taḳīya" in *EI*², X (2000), 134–36. On the concept of *taqīya* in Twelver Shīʿism see Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on Taqiyya," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975), 395–402; repr. in Etan Kohlberg, *Belief and Law in Imami Shiʿism* (Aldershot, 1991).

70) Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 91.

71) Loebenstein, "Miracles in Sīʿī Thought," 210. The Sunnīs believe that a *muʿjiza* is proof that its performer is a true prophet.

hides the miracle he performs, in the manner of a saint: perhaps early Shīʿite writers did not draw the same sharp distinction between miracle and wonder that would characterize a later age.[72]

In the tradition under discussion the Imām is portrayed as fearless in the face of the lion and the lion as docile in his presence. The events themselves are described without supernatural embellishments, although the effect of riding the lion is of course that limitations of distance do not apply to the Imām.

The entire scene is strongly reminiscent of the Prophet's nocturnal journey[73] on his mount *al-burāq*,[74] thus providing yet another link between the powers of the Imām and those of the Prophet. According to Muslim tradition the Prophet's journey took place on the 27th of Rajab in the third year before the *hijra*, i.e. in 619 CE. Tradition describes the Prophet's mount as a white beast that was part ass and part mule, with two eagle wings, a woman's face and a peacock's tail. This animal took the Prophet by night to Jerusalem and returned him to Mecca after his ascension to heaven. There are a number of similarities between the journey of the Prophet and that of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq:

- In both, long distances (many hundreds of kilometers) are covered within a short time in a single night.
- The Prophet and the Imām each ride alone on a mount, the Prophet on *al-burāq* and the Imām on a lion.
- In both cases the rider's energy and dynamism are very clearly in evidence and affect the course of events.

Here too, as we have already seen above, Shīʿite writers have gone to considerable lengths to express the idea that their Imām has prophet-like powers, including an ability to perform miracles that equal or even surpass those of prophets. In the present story the Imām covers a greater

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[72]) On the difference between a miracle and a wonder see, for example, Taqī l-Dīn Ibn Taymīya, *al-Muʿjizāt wa-l-karāmāt wa-anwāʿ khawāriq al-ʿādāt wa-manāfiʿihā wa-maḍārrihā*, ed. Aḥmad AL-ʿĪSAWĪ (Cairo, 1990); also Fatḥ Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *al-Maqāmāt al-ʿalīya fī l-karāmāt al-jalīya*, ed. ʿIffat Wiṣāl HAMZA (Cairo, 1986), 9–11.

[73]) For further details on the Prophet's nocturnal journey see Jamel Eddine BENCHEIKH, *Le voyage nocturne de Mahomet* (Paris, 1988), 240; also ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawīya*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf SAʿD (Beirut, n.d.), II, 234–44.

[74]) For details on this beast see Rudi PARET, art. "Burāḳ" in *EI*², I (1960), 1310–11.

distance (at least one way) than the Prophet did on his night journey; *al-burāq* was brought to the Prophet by the angel Gabriel, whereas the lion appeared before the Imām by its own volition; the Imām was able to use an ordinary beast – a lion – in the same way as the Prophet did an extraordinary creature. All of these features point to the Shīʿite tendency to ascribe to their Imāms abilities that are at least equal to those of prophets, if not superior to them.

In another tradition it is related that a money purse destined for the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq was given to al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar to transport. The Imām knew that al-Mufaḍḍal faced danger on this mission because there were robbers on the road. He therefore asked Abū Khālid al-Kābulī[75] (i. e. from the city of Kābul[76]) to take a cloth sash, go to the nearby thicket, place the sash on the ground and wait for lions to appear. The Imām added: "One of the lions will approach you and follow you to me." Abū Khālid was afraid, but the Imām assured him that the lions would not harm hin, and so he brought the lion to the Imām.

The lion stood motionless before the Imām, who spoke to him in a language that Abū Khālid was unable to understand. The Imām asked him: "What are you thinking of?" Abū Khālid answered: "I am thinking about how the lion is glorifying you." The lion then disappeared, only to reappear a short time later with the money purse between his teeth. The Imām then told Abū Khālid about al-Mufaḍḍal's dangerous mission: "Since there were robbers on the road who could have taken the purse," said the Imām, "I asked the lion to bring it to me."

Abū Khālid was sceptical, however, and said: "I find this hard to believe; I must speak first to al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar and then I shall know the truth." A few days later al-Mufaḍḍal arrived and told the Imām in Abū Khālid's presence that a lion had snatched the purse away from him. The Imām showed al-Mufaḍḍal the purse the lion had brought, and al-Mufaḍḍal confirmed that this was indeed the purse he had been carrying. He then asked Abū Khālid to go with the sash into the thicket again

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[75]) There existed two known people whose agnomen is Abū Khālid al-Kābulī: one, whose personal name is Wardān, is known as *al-aṣghar* ("the lesser"); another, whose personal name is Kankar, is known as *al-akbar* ("the greater"). For further details see al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 317 no. 4731–36. According to other sources there is only one such person, Wardān, whose epithet was Kankar; *ibid.*, 318 no. 4740–48; al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl*, 177 no. 3. He may have been a disciple of the fourth Imām, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 95/713); see al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 120–23, 191–93.

[76]) On the city of Kābul, see C. E. Bosworth, art. "Kābul" in *EI*^{2}, IV (1990), 356–57; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, IV, 426, s. v. "Kābul".

and bring the lion. When the lion arrived al-Mufaḍḍal identified him as well.[77]

In this tradition the Imām is portrayed as possessing the ability to call on the lion when the need arises. In is the Imām who initiates the encounter with the lion; he controls the lion and the lion obeys him and understands what he says. The two can communicate, and the lion refrains from attacking the Imām's companions and messengers.

Pictures of Lions That Produce Real Beasts

In three separate traditions three Imāms – Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, ʿAlī al-Riḍā[78] and ʿAlī al-Hādī – perform a similar miracle by turning painted images of lions into real ones. In one tradition Muḥammad ibn Sinān[79] reports:

> The ʿAbbāsid caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr once invited 70 residents of Kābul and said to them: "You claim that you are magicians (*sāḥirūn*), that you have inherited your abilities from your forefathers in the days of Moses, and that you can separate a wife from her husband. Well, the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is a magician just like you. I shall invite him, and if your magic overpowers his I shall give you a great reward and much money." So they arose and by their magic produced a picture with 70 lions in it. The caliph then sat on his couch, put his crown on his head and asked his guards to bring in the Imām al-Ṣādiq. The Imām entered and, knowing what the magicians intended, raised his hands towards heaven and uttered incomprehensible words, some silently and others out loud. Then he turned to the people of Kābul and said to them: "Woe on you, for I can overcome your magic." He then gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion[80] and called out: "Oh *qaswara* ('lions'), devour them!"

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77) al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 273–74; ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Safīnat al-biḥār wa-madīnat al-ḥikam wa-l-āthār* (Beirut, n. d.). In Arabic literature the phrase "in the mouth of the lion" serves as a metaphor for something that is difficult or impossible to obtain. The fact that the Imām in our story easily takes the money pouch from the lion's mouth thus tells the Arabic reader that the Imām possesses powers that enable him to do with ease what would be difficult or impossible for ordinary men. For further details on this metaphor see, for example, al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb*, 384.

78) The eighth Imām of Twelver Shīʿism, d. 203/818. See Bernard Lewis, art. "Alī al-Riḍā" in *EI*², I (1960), 399–400.

79) On him see al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 389, 506–509 nos. 977–83, 582 nos. 1090–93; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 328 no. 888.

80) In Jewish tradition Judah possessed a voice like a lion; it is not clear whether Shīʿite tradition in this case intended to make a connection between the Imām and Judah.

> Suddenly every image of a lion turned into a real lion that jumped out of the picture, pounced on one of the people of Kābul and devoured him. In a few moments all 70 were devoured. Upon witnessing this the caliph fainted. When he regained consciousness he said to the Imām: "Take the lions away." He then added: "I shall never again doubt your status as an Imām." Al-Ṣādiq then made the lions return to the picture as before. The caliph also asked the Imām to restore the devoured people of Kābul, but the Imām answered him: "This is a wish that cannot be fulfilled."[81]

Another tradition tells of the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā who, when in the court of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Maʾmūn,[82] was taunted by a group of the caliph's close companions, in particular a guard by the name of Ḥāmid ibn Mahrān. This group said to the Imām: "If you are truly an Imām then you should be able to turn the two lions that are painted on the prop of the caliph's guard into real beasts." The Imām was furious and addressed the two images: "Do what you want with this adulterer; devour him and leave no trace." Suddenly the lions became real, jumped out of the picture, pounced on the guard, crushed him and licked his blood in sight of the astonished group. When the lions were finished with the guard they approached the Imām and said: "Oh friend of God on earth, do you want us to devour the caliph al-Maʾmūn as we devoured his guard?" Upon hearing the lions say these words in the language of humans[83] the caliph fainted. The Imām al-Riḍā ordered the caliph's entourage to pour perfume on the ruler in order to revive him, and at the same time the lions continued to beg the Imām for permission to devour the caliph. But the Imām replied that God had already decided on the caliph's fate, which could not be changed. The two lions then asked the Imām: "Is there anything else you want of us?" The Imām answered: "Become pictures again as you were before." The two lions immediately turned into pictures, as they had been previously.[84]

The third tradition to be discussed under the present heading was reported by a man named Zurāra,[85] who related the following story. One

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[81]) al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 299–300; al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, II, 399. See also ʿAlī ibn Yūnus al-Nabāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ* (al-Najaf, 1964), II, 138.

[82]) The seventh ʿAbbāsid caliph, r. 198–218/813–33. See M. Rekaya, art. "al-Maʾmūn ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd" in *EI*^{2}, VI (1991), 331–39.

[83]) al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 381.

[84]) In the Old Testament the lion is represented as punishing those who do not believe in God. See, for example, Kaplan, *The Lion in the Hebrew Bible*, 124, 180; also I Kings 13:1–32, 20:35–43; II Kings 2:23–24.

[85]) A Shīʿite who served as the caliph al-Mutawakkil's personal secretary and chamberlain (*ḥājib*). For further details see al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*,

day the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil[86] received a visit from an Indian wizard who performed his witchcraft by means of a box. Al-Mutawakkil asked the wizard to perform an act of witchcraft that would bring shame on the Imām ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Naqī[87] and promised him the sum of 1000 *dīnār*s if he succeeded. The wizard agreed, and the caliph prepared a feast to which the Imām, the wizard and others were invited. When the Imām arrived he leaned on a prop to his left that had a lion drawn on it. When the meal began the Imām reached for the bread, but the wizard made it fly around the room. Everyone present burst out in laughter and mocked the Imām. The latter then struck the painting of the lion on the prop and ordered it: "Go and devour the wizard!" Suddenly the painted lion became real, pounced on the Indian wizard and swallowed him; then it returned and became a picture once more. Everyone present was upset. The caliph asked the Imām to restore the wizard to life, to which the Imām replied: "I swear to you that the wizard will never return to life." He then added: "How dare you use the enemies of God to attack the friends of God." The Imām then left the caliph's palace and the wizard was never seen again.

These three traditions exemplify the Imām's ability to affect objects around him. Since the miracle involved in all these traditions included a fundamental change in the characteristics of the objects in question, in this case paintings or drawings, the miracles consist not just in the timing of the occurrence but also in the very nature of the occurrence itself. The Imām embodied inanimate objects with traits that only living – in fact only sentient – beings possess.

The means by which the miracles are performed are also worth noting:[88] a loud shout or a blow to the picture cause the miracle and the living lion to materialize. The descriptions of the lion's deeds are very graphic,

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I, 393; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, L, 192 no. 6; al-Nabāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, II, 204 no. 8; ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma*, ed. Hāshim al-Rasūlī (Tabriz, 1961), II, 393.

86) The tenth ʿAbbāsid caliph, r. 232–47/847–67. See Hugh Kennedy, art. "al-Mutawwakil ʿalā llāh" in *EI*², VII (1993), 777–78.

87) al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij wa-l-jarā'iḥ*, I, 400–401; also Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥārith (al-Shaykh al-Bahā'ī), *Miftāḥ al-fallāḥ* (Beirut, 1984), 213; Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz* (Qumm, 1992), II, 138; al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma*, II, 393–94.

88) Other actions by which Imāms are reported to perform miracles are stamping with the foot on the ground, anointing and blindfolding another, and calling out God's name.

indeed, gruesome. However, since the victims are depicted as refusing to believe in the Imām or as scorning him, they do not arouse any sympathy in the narrator or in the listener. What happens to the victims is perceived as divine punishment.

Repelling, Cursing and Killing the Imām's Enemies

In the following tradition the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is reported to have heard that the poet al-Ḥakam ibn ʿAyyāsh al-Kalbī[89] mocked and denounced Zayd ibn ʿAlī (d. 122/740) in verse. Among other things, he wrote that the caliph ʿAlī cannot be compared to his predecessor ʿUthmān (r. 23–35/644–56) and that the latter was the better of the two. When the Imām heard of this he raised his trembling hands towards heaven and cursed the poet: "Oh God! If al-Ḥakam is lying, send one of your dogs to devour him." Some days later al-Ḥakam was sent by the Umayyads to al-Kūfa. On the way he and his companions slept out in the open. They lay in a circle with him in the middle. While they slept a lion approached the group, sniffed at each man and finally recognized al-Ḥakam by his smell and devoured him.[90] In this tale the lion appears in answer to the Imām's curse. The lion is credited with being able to "smell out" the Imām's enemies.

This tradition is quite clearly modelled on the story of the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿUtayba ibn Abī Lahab, the Prophet's son-in-law, married to his daughter Umm Kulthūm.[91] ʿUtayba's father Abū Lahab[92] found out that a verse of the Qurʾān says of him: "The power of Abū Lahab will perish, and he will perish."[93] As a result his son spit in the

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89) For more on his poetry, its anti-Shīʿite overtones and his attacks on Zayd ibn ʿAlī, see Mufliḥ al-Nimr al-Fāʿiz, *Shʿr al-qabāʾil al-yamānīya fī l-ʿaṣr al-umawī* (Amman, 2001), 144–45. See also Abū l-Abbās Muḥammad ibn Zayd al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil fī l-lugha wa-l-adab*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Dālī (Beirut, 1986), III, 1317.

90) ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn al-Hāshimī, *al-Mathālib al-muhimma fī taʾrīkh al-nabī wa-l-zahrāʾ wa-l-aʾimma* (Najaf, 1968), 157–58. In another version of this tradition the Imām whom the poet cursed was al-Bāqir rather than al-Ṣādiq; see al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 95–96.

91) For further details on her see Frants Buhl/Ruth Roded, art. "Umm Kulthūm", in *EI*², X (2000), 855.

92) The Prophet's paternal uncle, a fierce opponent of Islam. See W. Montgomery Watt, art. "Abū Lahab" in *EI*², I (1960), 136–37.

93) Q. 111:1–2.

Prophet's face in anger and divorced the Prophet's daughter, whereupon Muḥammad cursed ʿUtayba and asked God to send a "dog" [to devour him]. Sometime later ʿUtayba accompanied his father and others of the tribe of Quraysh[94] on a journey to Syria, and on the way they camped near a monastery, though one of the monks had warned them that there were lions in the vicinity. Fearing the Prophet's curse, Abū Lahab asked his fellow tribesmen to surround his son when they slept. While they were all asleep a lion came, sniffed out ʿUtayba, pounced on him and gave a blow to his arm. ʿUtayba awakened and cried out in fright to his companions: "Did I not tell you that the Prophet Muḥammad is a true prophet who speaks the truth, and that God fulfills his wishes?", and then the lion devoured him.

In this story, too, the lion is able to "sniff out" his intended victim; he does no harm to anyone else, but when he identifies ʿUtayba he pounces upon him and devours him.[95] Before doing so the lion speaks as follows in human language: "This is ʿUtayba son of Abū Lahab, who left Mecca in secret and claims that he will kill Muḥammad." He then tears ʿUtayba to pieces[96] in a story that figures in the genre of the *sīrat al-nabī*, or "biography of the Prophet". This was taken over by Shīʿite writers and ascribed to the Imām in order to express the idea that the latter's powers are comparable to those of a prophet.

In another tradition, transmitted in the name of ʿUmāra ibn Zayd,[97] a lion protects the Imām from his enemies. In this story a associate of the

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[94]) A prominent Arabian tribe of merchants that controlled Mecca in pre-Islamic times. See W. Montgomery Watt, art. "Ḳuraysh" in *EI*^{2}, V (1986), 434–35.

[95]) Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Dalāʾil al-nubūwa*, ed. Muḥammad Rawās Qalʿajī and ʿAbd al-Barr ʿAbbās (Beirut, 1991), 454–58.

[96]) al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, II, 521. According to another tradition the incident that began the series of events recounted in the text was the revelation of Q. 53:1, "By the Star when it goes down." ʿUtayba announced that he refused to believe in the Star, whereupon the Prophet cursed him and the same chain of events ensued. The poet Ḥassān ibn Thābit (d. 54/674), known as the "poet of the Prophet", wrote a ten-verse poem in which he described the incident in detail. See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, LV, 9; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, I, 80–81.

[97]) His full name was Abū Zayd ʿUmāra ibn Zayd al-Khayrānī al-Hamdhānī al-Madanī. For further details see al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl*, 245 no. 17; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 302 no. 827; Taqī l-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd* (Tehran, 1963), 487 nos. 347, 445. However, according to Ibn al-Ghaḍāʾirī all the traditions reported by ʿUmāra are false. See Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghaḍāʾirī, *Rijāl Ibn al-Ghaḍāʾirī* (Qumm, 1944), IV, 252.

Abbāsid caliph al-Maʾmūn asked him to kill the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā, who was present. Suddenly a lion appeared at the Imām's right shoulder and a snake on his left, and protected the Imām. The caliph then said to his son Abbās: "I shall continue to love the Imām al-Riḍā, for I have witnessed many miracles he has performed; I have seen him taking dates out of a well and feeding a multitude."[98]

A Jewish Midrashic tale that may have influenced Shīʿite writers to a certain extent is the following. When Moses came with Aaron to Pharaoh's palace they saw that at every entrance there stood a pair of lions that no one could approach. But Moses and Aaron approached them and then Moses placed his staff on them. The lions rejoiced with them and licked their feet.[99]

In Shīʿite literature the idea of a lion that protects the Imām recurs quite frequently. The Shīʿite sect known as al-Ḥanafīya[100] or as al-Kaysānīya, headed by al-Mukhtār ibn Abī Saʿīd al-Thaqafī,[101] believed that the "Hidden Imām" Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīya,[102] who will in the fullness

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[98]) al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, VII, 21–22.

[99]) Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, II, 332.

[100]) The sect, bent on avenging the death of Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ, was named al-Kaysānīya or al-Mukhtārīya after the name of its leader, Mukhtār (agnomen Abū ʿUmar Kaysān). However, according to some sources the two names Mukhtār and Kaysān belong to two different individuals, Kaysān being a client (*mawlā*) of Alī. See Wilferd Madelung, art. "al-Kaysāniyya" in *EI*², VI (1997), 836–38; also Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. Abd al-Azīz Muḥammad al-Wakīl (Cairo, n.d.), I, 147: W. Montgomery Watt, "Shīʿism under the Umayyads," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1960, 158–68.

[101]) For details see G. R. Hawting, art. "al-Mukhtār" in *EI*², VII (1993), 521–24.

[102]) Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib was the half-brother on his father's side of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. His mother was a prisoner taken in the battle of al-Yamāma, named Khawala bint Jaʿfar al-Ḥanafīya. He was born in the year of the caliph Abū Bakr's death (13/634) and is cited for traditions quoting the caliphs ʿUmar and ʿUthmān as well as some of the Prophet's Companions. After Ḥusayn's death at Karbalāʾ there were those who saw him as the leader of the Shīʿites. In the year 65/685 al-Mukhtār organized a rebellion in al-Kūfa in Ibn al-Ḥanafīya's name, but the latter took no part in it. He died in Medina in 81/700, but some of his followers believed that in the fullness of time he would reappear as the Mahdī. For further details see Frants Buhl, art. "Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya" in *EI*², VII (1993), 402–403. Wilferd Madelung, art. "Kaysāniyya" in *EI*², VI (1993), 836–38; Heinz Halm, *Shīʿism* (Edinburgh, 1991), 17–19. See also Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (Beirut, 1985), IV, 110–30; ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (Cairo, n.d.), 26–27.

of time appear as the Mahdī, was in a cave on Mt. Raḍwā[103] in Arabia. The entrance to this cave was protected by two beasts, a lion on the right and a leopard on the left.[104]

Friedländer was of the opinion that Shīʿism was influenced in this matter by the prophecy in Isaiah 11:6–9, and saw in the peaceful coexistence of man and beast signs of the impending coming of the Mahdī. The fact that in the Shīʿite version of the story the lion and leopard have the task of guarding the Imām, an element missing from the biblical prophecy, is explained by Friedländer as resulting from the fact that in Isaiah the words "lion" and "leopard" appear in the singular form.[105]

A similar story about protective lions is also told in a Sunnī tradition about the second caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. In this tradition it is related that a messenger from the Byzantine emperor came to visit the caliph. When the messenger saw that the caliph was asleep he thought of killing him, but then suddenly two lions arose out of the soil and stood over the caliph. When he awoke the lions disappeared. ʿUmar asked the messenger what had happened, so the latter told him the story and then later converted to Islam.[106]

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[103]) A mountain in Medina; see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, III, 51 *s. v.* "Raḍwā".

[104]) Opinions among Shīʿite writers differ as to the precise type and number of beasts guarding the future Mahdī. In addition to the version of one lion and one leopard there are at least four others: two lions and two leopards, two leopards and one lion, two lions, and an unspecified number of lions and leopards. See Wadād al-Qāḍī, *al-Kaysānīya fī l-taʾrīkh wa-l-adab* (Beirut, 1974), 180–81.

[105]) Israel Friedländer, "The Heterodoxies of the Shiʿites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 29 (1909), 37–38. In his words: "In any event the messianic character of this conception was misunderstood, the wild animals were taken to be accordingly substituted by the singular and in explanation the dual was added, which gives an entirely different appearance to the whole description."

[106]) Yūsuf ibn Ismāʿīl al-Nabhānī, *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Ibrāhīm Aṭwa ʿAwaḍ (Beirut, 1992), I, 159.

From Assassin to Companion

In a story told by Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd (d. 194/800)[107] it is related that the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809)[108] imprisoned the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā. One day the prison guards, on orders from the caliph, brought some lions to the Imām's place of imprisonment in the hope that they would devour him. But when they entered they wagged their tails, congratulated the Imām and told him that God would protect him from the caliph's evil intentions. When the caliph learned of this he freed the Imām and said: "I do this lest the Imām cast a spell on me and upon my retinue."[109] Here again the lion recognizes the Imām, greets him in a friendly manner and wishes him well.

In yet another story the Imām ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Naqī states that God has forbidden lions to devour the flesh of Fāṭima's descendents (i.e. of the Shīʿite Imāms and their blood relatives). The story is as follows. During the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil a woman appeared before him and claimed to be Zaynab, daughter of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima.[110] The caliph said to her: "How can this be possible? After all, a long time has passed since the death of the Prophet Muḥammad." The woman replied: "God's Messenger anointed my forehead and asked God to restore my youth every 40 years; in all the time that has passed since then I have been in hiding, until I became so poor that I had to come out." The incredulous caliph summoned all the descendents of Abū Ṭālib, who told him that Zaynab, Fāṭima's daughter, had died many years previously. But the woman insisted that they were lying, so the caliph summoned the Imām al-Naqī to ask for his advice. The Imām duly came and told the caliph that lions are forbidden to eat the flesh of Fāṭima's descendents. He proposed that the woman be put in the lions' den; if she were who she claimed, then she would not be harmed. But the woman would not go into

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[107]) His full name is Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Zuhrī al-Madanī; see al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 157 nos. 1723–28.

[108]) The fifth ʿAbbāsid caliph, r. 170–93/786–809. For further details see F. Omar, art. "Hārūn al-Rashīd" in *EI*^{2}, III (1969), 232–34.

[109]) al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 321–22; see also al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, VI, 201. In a similar tradition it is related that the Imām Ḥasan al-Askarī was thrown to the lions by a servant of the ʿAbbāsids by the name of Naḥrīr. When the servant later came to see what had become of the Imām he saw him praying, surrounded by the lions. See al-Baḥrānī, *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, VII, 646–47, 562.

[110]) According to another version Zaynab claimed that she was the daughter of Ḥasan the son of ʿAlī; see Donaldson, *The Shīʿite Religion*, 213.

the den out of fear of being devoured. Thus all the assembled company learned that she was an impostor.[111]

It would appear that in this case Shīʿite tradition has performed an intercultural transformation, assimilating elements of Jewish legend, and in particular motifs from the Book of Daniel,[112] where it is related that Cyrus, king of Persia, threw Daniel into the lions' den, where he remained safe for seven days among the hungry beasts. The king then admitted that Daniel's God was the true God and ordered Daniel's enemies to be thrown into the lions' den. As soon as this was done the lions pounced on them and tore them to pieces.[113] Clearly the composers of the Shīʿite tradition intended to compare the Imām's powers with those of Daniel.

The Arab writer al-Ibshīhī provides another version of this tradition. In it Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia (d. 562 BCE) dreamed that he would be killed by a male child born in his kingdom. When he awoke he ordered that all newborn male children be killed. Daniel's mother, who was afraid for the life of her child, hid him in a well, where he was guarded by a lion.[114]

In another version of the story, also told by al-Ibshīhī, Nebuchadnezzar knew he was fated to be killed by Daniel and he therefore threw him into the lions' den. The two lions in the den wagged their tails and licked Daniel; he remained unharmed until Jeremiah came to him with food and water and released him.

Similar stories can be found in Sunnī collections of traditions. Thus, for example, it is related that the Prophet's Companion Mahrān (agnomen Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān), better known by his epithet Safīna (literally, "ship"),[115] was on a sea voyage when his boat sprang a leak and he

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111) al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, I, 404.

112) The story of Daniel in the lions' den has played a prominent role in the lore of the revealed religions. Thus, for example, R. Israel Najjāra in an Aramaic poem alludes to the Book of Daniel in order to express God's protection of the people of Israel. For further details see Yigal ARIEL, *Myrrh and Myrtle: Studies in the Books of Daniel and Esther, Redemption in the Books of the Exile* (Hispin, Israel, 2000), 128 n. 44 [Hebrew]. See also al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, LXII, 81.

113) For details see GINSBERG, *Legends of the Jews*, IV, 346.

114) Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf* (Beirut, 1992), 533.

115) The Prophet gave him this nickname because of the heavy loads he carried, in the manner of a ship. According to another version the name alludes to the "ship of the desert", or camel, in an allusion to his frequent journeys. For further details see, for example, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *al-Maqāmāt al-ʿalīya fī l-karāmāt al-jalīya li-baʿḍ al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. ʿIffat Wiṣāl ḤAMZA (sine loco, 1986), 86; al-Nabḥānī, *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*, I, 143. See also Ibn Taymīya, *Muʿjizāt*, 22 n. 3.

was forced to anchor near a forest. Suddenly a lion appeared. Safīna said to the lion: "Oh Abū l-Ḥārith (an expression meaning "lion" in Arabic)! I am Safīna, the friend of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God." Upon hearing this the lion lowered its head and began pushing Safīna to safety. Then the lion took leave of him with a roar.

Another tradition relates that ʿUqba ibn Nāfiʿ (d. 63/683),[116] a Companion of the Prophet sent by the caliph Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–80)[117] to conquer North Africa with an army of 10,000 men, came to a place infested with lions, snakes and other dangerous animals. ʿUqba approached this place, which no man dared enter, cursed the animals in the name of God, and made them all flee, including the lions, who carried away their cubs in their mouths.[118] The message conveyed by this story is that the Prophet's Companions have the power, when they appeal to God, to subdue lions to their will.

A similar tale appears in the genre of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, or "tales of the prophets". When Moses came to Egypt, Aaron, whom God had informed of Moses' coming, went to meet him on the bank of the Nile. That day was also the appointed day for Pharaoh's lions to drink from the Nile. When Moses passed by the lions they raised their heads and stared at him, but then God filled them with fear and they fled to their lairs near Pharaoh's palace.[119] Contrary to what we have seen in previous traditions, in this tale the lions, after realizing that they are in the presence of a prophet, are fearful and flee.

According to yet another tradition, it is told that a lion encountered the ascetic Ibrāhīm ibn al-Adham (d. 161/778),[120] who was on a journey together with some companions. Ibrāhīm asked his companions to address the lion together, as follows: Oh God! Guard us with your eyes that never sleep, protect us with your principles that cannot be fathomed, and have mercy on us with your might so that we do not die. You are our hope,

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116) One of the most important Muslim generals in the early years of Islam and founder of the city of al-Qayrawān in North Africa. For further details see Vassilios Christides, art. "ʿUḳba b. Nāfiʿ" in *EI*², X (2000), 789.

117) The first Umayyad caliph and founder of the dynasty. See Martin Hinds, art. "Muʿāwiya" in *EI*², VII (1993), 263–68.

118) For more on this story see, for example, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *al-Maqāmāt al-ʿalīya*, 89–90.

119) Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Naysabūrī al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (also known as *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*) (Beirut, n. d.), 161.

120) For further details see Russell Jones, art. "Ibrāhīm b. Adham" in *EI*², III (1969), 985–86.

oh God, oh God." When they had finished uttering this call the lion fled without having done them any harm.

To conclude, we have seen that lions are represented as being able to recognize Imāms, prophets, Companions of the Prophet and ascetics. They never attack them, they sometimes greet them with a wag of the tail, and occasionally they protect them. The Shīʿite traditions we have discussed emphasize the loyalty of lions to Shīʿite Imāms, in contrast to many humans who belong to other Islamic sects and do not recognize the Imāms. The lions do not attack the Imām even when they are hungry.

From a psychological point of view this development can be explained in terms of coping with the harsh realities of the lot of Shīʿites and their Imāms. The waning hopes for a more just treatment of their Imāms by the rulers of Islam arouse in Shīʿites a belief in occult powers possessed by the Imāms that enable them to extricate themselves from the impossible situation in which they find themselves. In other words, the lion who befriends the Imām compensates for what is happening in reality, or provides an interpretation of that reality. This would appear to be the historical background that encouraged the development of this genre of story, with its lions and miracles that help the Imām cope with the dangers he faces, both internal and external.

Conclusion

In the traditions discussed above, the miracles involving an Imām and a lion are usually aimed at an individual, especially a non-believer in the Imāmate in general or in a particular Imām's right to the office. Such an individual, whether an anti-Shīʿite caliph or another person, stands in danger of being devoured by the lion as divine punishment, with the Imām's agreement or encouragement.

The common denominator among the lion's victims is thus their refusal to recognize and swear fealty to the Imām. The victim's fate arouses no sympathy in the reader, since the former is presented as hostile to the Imām, whose status is confirmed by means of the miracle. Miracles compensate the Imāms for their political impotence; their spiritual rule took the place of the material power they lacked. Convincing their followers of the need for absolute loyalty was the only way they had to impose their authority.

The lion in these miracles appears during the day or at night, in a forest, on a road or even within a picture or in a cage at the caliph's palace. The image of the lion consists of a combination of its actual natural characteristics together with various subjective humanizing features and

even some supernatural attributes. For example, the lion speaks with the Imām, exhibits human-like behavior and even shares with the Imām the possession of occult knowledge.

The lion at the Imām's disposal is capable of applying magical powers and devours those who are not loyal to the Imām or who scorn him. It demonstrates its friendship towards the Imām, identifies him, helps and obeys him, refuses passage to travellers until they curse the Imām's murderers, or guards valuable possessions belonging to the Imām and makes sure that they arrive safely. The lion also serves as the Imām's mount, enabling him to traverse vast distances in a short time.

The Imām can call on the lion at any time; he can even summon a real lion out of a picture. It is always the Imām who initiates the summons of the lion and he obviously has command over it.

Both Imām and lion are portrayed as possessing supernatural powers, but the lion's powers are subordinated to the Imām's will. The Imām uses the lion to attain his aims; the lion obeys the Imām, who can understand what the lion says. The encounter between the Imām and the lion is the central foundation of the miracles performed by the Imām; it drives the events surrounding them and its various manifestations create different interactions and versions.

All the traditions about Imāms' miracles with lions at their center are represented as occurring at a certain actual time; the narrators of the traditions present the stories as events that actually happened, the characteristics of the Imām as existing in real fact, and so also the wonders he performed. In all the traditions the true hero is the Imām: he stands at the focus of the story, which begins and ends with him. He dictates the course of events, and whenever anyone encounters a lion it is only the Imām who is able to extricate him from danger.

As we have shown in the present study, lions appear in classical Arabic literature and in the literatures of other peoples; Shīʿite writers were in all likelihood influenced by these literatures. The transformation of the lion motif from classical sources and the import of lions' tales from other cultures created the foundations for the emergence and development of the Shīʿite miracle stories involving lions as important participants. The fact that these traditions have survived for many centuries proves that they answer social and cultural needs. The narrators of these traditions have a definite social, religious or political agenda, and they fit their stories to their target audience.

In conclusion, by providing the lion with human characteristics and making it play such an important role in miracles performed by the Imām, Shīʿite writers are telling their audiences that God granted the

Imāms supernatural powers and gave them control over lions just as He had given such control to the prophets in days past. The prophets, and after them the Shīʿite Imāms, possess wisdom and knowledge, while the lions possess strength and courage. The Imām unites his own wisdom with the lion's strength and so, with God's permission, controls this beast, the strongest and most impressive of all animals.

KHALID SINDAWI

THE ROLE OF BIRDS IN SHĪʿITE THOUGHT

Introduction

The purpose of the present article is to analyze the role which birds play in the thought of Twelver Shīʿism[1] by way of providing a typology of relevant traditions. The choice of topic is based on two main considerations. First of all, the sheer number of Shīʿite traditions in which birds appear is quite large, especially when compared with the mention of other creatures, and in these traditions birds play a considerable variety of roles. Secondly, the whole subject of birds and their role in Shīʿite thought has to the best of our knowledge as yet not received the treatment it deserves. While the study is based on quite a few different Shīʿite compositions the following four works are the core sources:

1. *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt fī faḍāʾil Āl Muḥammad* by Abū Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farūkh al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī[2] (d. 290/903). Al-Ṣaffār was a contemporary of the tenth and eleventh imāms of Twelver Shīʿism (ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī[3] d. 254/868, and Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī[4] d. 260/874, respectively). The value of this work for the present paper lies mainly in the fact that it contains very old Shīʿite traditions.

2. *Kitāb al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*[5] by Quṭb al-Dīn Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh al-Rāwindī (d. 573/1177-8), Ibn Shahrāshūb's teacher. *K. al-Kharāʾij* is devoted exclusively to tales of miracles associated with the imāms.

3. *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*[6] by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192). Ibn Shahrāshūb was considered the greatest Shīʿite scholar of his generation and earned the respect of Sunnīs as well. His *Manāqib* is a collection of biographies of the

[1] Whenever the words Shīʿite, Shīʿa and Shīʿism are used in this paper they refer to Imāmī or Twelver Shīʿism.

[2] For more on him see Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī", pp. 221-250.

[3] For details on him see Donaldson, *The Shiʿite Religion*, pp. 209-216.

[4] For more on him see Lewis, "al-ʿAskarī Abū l-Ḥasan", *EI*^{2}, vol. 7, p. 443.

[5] On this book see al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa*, vol. 7, pp. 145-146.

[6] For more on him see al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, vol. 35, pp. 16-24.

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imāms. Among the chapters devoted to each imām there are some dealing with the miracles attributed to them.

4. *Biḥār al-anwār*[7] by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī[8] (d. 1110/1698). Al-Majlisī, who devoted the greater part of his life to collecting Shīᶜite traditions, lived in Iṣfahān. In 1585 he was appointed by the Safavid ruler of Persia to the post of Shaykh al-Islām of Iṣfahān, a position which he used to promote the standing of Twelver Shīᶜism. His *Biḥār al-anwār* is based on numerous sources from different periods, including the three previously-mentioned works, making it possible to compare different versions of the traditions which appear in them.

The traditions in which birds play a major role are divided below into a number of groups. The main criterion for classification into the different groups is the character of the bird's role in the tradition. In the analysis of the functions of birds in Shīᶜite thought we also took into consideration, wherever possible, the chronological order based on the years of the imāms' deaths. Where several traditions deal with the same topic and contribute little that is new with respect either to the role of the bird or the imām's powers, some traditions are mentioned only in a footnote while a small number have been deleted entirely from this account. Our analysis of the role of birds in Shīᶜite thought will cover the following points:

- What birds are mentioned in Shīᶜite traditions?
- What roles do these birds play?

Before opening the discussion on these points we present the reader with a survey of what classical Arabic sources have to say on the subject of birds.

Birds in classical Arabic literature[9]

In classical Arabic literature animals of many kinds are mentioned, often in relation to their usefulness to humans, etc. Small wonder, then, that Arabic dictionaries contain numerous names, and synonyms, for birds and animals. Following the establishment of the Abbasid State (750 CE) the Arabs began to classify the rich materials which had accumulated in the form of oral traditions and put them down in writing. Compositions in all branches of knowledge appeared, in many of which considerable space is devoted to a discussion of the various species of animals and birds, their traits, colors and more.[10]

7 For details on this work see: al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīᶜa ilā taṣānīf al-shīᶜa*, vol. 3, pp. 16-26; Kohlberg, "Beḥār al-Anwār", *E.Ir.*, vol. 4, pp. 90-93.

8 For more on him see: Hairi, "Al-Madjlisī", *EI*^{2}, vol. 7, pp. 1086-1088.

9 On the role of animals in classical Arabic literature see the Introduction in Prof. Kanazi's article, "Abū Bakr al-ᶜAllāf fī rithāʾ hirr", pp. 201-203.

10 See, for example: al-Thaᶜālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb*, pp. 446-449.

The works in question differ from each other with respect to the motives for their composition and their purpose, and as a result they naturally also differ in content. Some writers used animals as a means for getting their message across. This is the case, for example, with *Kalīla wa Dimna*, translated from Hindi into Persian and then, during the first half of the second century AH, from Persian into Arabic. This book gave the initial impetus to the development of Arabic folk literature on animals.

In the course of time, as the nomadic Bedouin desert Arabs became sedentary city dwellers, their attitude towards nature changed as well.[11] They began to take an interest in birds and animals with which they were not acquainted when they lived in the desert, including various species of striking-looking birds. This gave rise to a number of voluminous compositions on animals, such as the early work *K. al-Ḥayawān* by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868) and the much later *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā* by al-Damīrī (d. 1405), both of which contain a wealth of detailed information about the animal world. In the Qurʾān ants are mentioned,[12] as is a hoopoe which speaks to King Solomon.[13] Elsewhere a bird praises God.[14] There are references to other beasts as well.

Three compositions about birds from the Abbasid period deserve to be mentioned here: *Kitāb al-ṭayr* by Aḥmad b. Ḥātim al-Bāhilī[15] (d. 846); a book by Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī[16] (d. 862); and a work by Kamāl Mujāshiʿ b. Aslam b. Muḥammad b. Shujāʿ al-Ḥāsib[17] (d. 951). In subsequent times we find philosophical compositions about birds, such as Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1077) *Risālat al-ṭayr*, a work by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), and Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār's (d. 1229) *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*. The latter two works are of a mystical nature, in which birds are described as wanting to approach God, stand before His throne and state their willingness to join the legions of angels in God's service.[18] Still later there are Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar b. al-Muẓaffar al-Wardī's (d. 1445) *Manṭiq al-ṭayr bi-irādat al-khayr* and Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Ḥajala al-Tilmisānī's (d. 1375) *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*,[19] both about birds. Small wonder, then that the authors of the *maqātil* make use of birds in their writings.

[11] A very clear expression of this change can be found, for example, in the Arabic poetry of the period. For more details see von Grunebaum, "The Response to Nature", pp. 137-151.

[12] Q 27:16.

[13] Q 27:20.

[14] Q 24:12.

[15] See Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 61.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 339.

[18] See Saʿd al-Dīn, "al-ʿAnqāʾ", pp. 128-134; see also al-Ghazālī, *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, pp. 67-69.

[19] See Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, vol. 2, p. 692.

Birds in Shᶜīte thought play numerous roles, as follows:

Birds which sound curses against those who hate the Shīᶜites

According to Shīᶜite belief their imām can understand and communicate with birds just as Solomon did. Among the imāms' favorite birds were larks, whose song they interpreted as a hymn of praise to God which, so they understood, included the phrase "May God curse those who hate Muḥammad's family ["Muḥammad's family" = the Shīᶜites]".[20] For this reason the eighth imām, ᶜAlī al-Riḍā[21] (d. 818 CE) forbade the Shīᶜite community to eat the flesh of the lark, to curse this bird or to permit children to toy with it.[22] The lark was so much appreciated by Shīᶜites that it was related of the imām ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn[23] (d. 713 CE) that he would sow a field not in order to grow a crop but only so that the larks could feed, so much were they loved and appreciated.[24] In yet another tradition, related by Muḥammad b. Muslim,[25] the latter reports:

> I went out with Abū Jaᶜfar [the fifth imām of Twelver Shīᶜism, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, d. 732 CE]. Eventually we found ourselves in a dry, very hot valley. There were some sparrows there which hovered around his mule. He held them back and said repeatedly: "No go away!". Then Abū Jaᶜfar went to his destination. And on the following day, as we went back and came once again to that valley the sparrows flew to him again and circled around his mule, flapping their wings. Whereupon I heard him say: "Drink and quench your thirst". I looked and saw that there was some water in the valley. I then asked Abū Jaᶜfar: "Yesterday you refused water to the sparrows and today you gave them to drink?" He answered: "Know that today there were larks among the sparrows, and therefore I gave them to drink. Were it not for the larks I would not have given them to drink." I said: "Sir, what is the difference between larks and sparrows?" He answered: "Alas, the sparrows are friendly towards ᶜUmar [b. al-Khaṭṭāb] because they are like

[20] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 225 nos. 1, 3; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Āmālī*, p. 687 no. 1495-2; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 61, p. 303 no. 7; *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, vol. 16, p. 123, ch. 29 no. 19346-1; *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 670.

[21] For more information on this imām see: Lewis, "ᶜAlī al-Riḍā", *EI*^{2}, vol. 1, pp. 399-400.

[22] *Wasāʾil al-shīᶜa*, vol. 23, p. 396, ch. 41 no. 29835; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 61, p. 303 no. 7; *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, vol. 16, p. 123, ch. 29 no. 19346-1.

[23] The fourth imām of Twelver Shīᶜism. For more details on him see: Kohlberg, "Zayn al-ᶜĀbidīn b. ᶜAlī", *EI*^{2}, vol. 9, pp. 481-483.

[24] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 225 no. 2; *Wasāʾil al-shīᶜa*, vol. 23, p. 396 no. 29836; *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, vol. 16, p. 123, ch. 29 no. 19347-2.

[25] His full name is Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Riyāḥ al-Ṭāʾifī al-Thaqafī, his agnomen was Abū Jaᶜfar and his epithets al-Awqaṣ and al-Ṭaḥḥān. He was a client of the Banū Thaqīf and blind in one eye. He heard traditions from two imāms, Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq and is considered one of the former's two disciples. For more on him see: *Rijāl al-ᶜallāma al-Ḥillī*, pp. 149-150 no. 59; *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, pp. 161-169 nos. 272-275; *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, pp. 323-324 no. 882.

him, but the larks are friendly towards the Prophet's family and chirp they say 'Blessed are you, family of the Prophet, blessed are your followers [= *shīᶜa*] and may your enemies be cursed'". He then added: "Enmity towards us comes from everything, from the rock doves among birds and from Wednesdays among the days of the week.[26]

This tradition would seem to claim that Shīᶜite imāms were able to distinguish various species of birds and claimed to know which were hostile towards Shīᶜism, like sparrows and rock doves, and which were friendly, like larks, whose presence in a flock of sparrows caused the imām to treat them with kindness.

Birds which grieve for the Shīᶜites' misfortunes

Shīᶜite sources report that the swift (a species of swallow) is beloved of Shīᶜites, who are forbidden to kill it, for they believe that by its circles in the sky it expresses his grief at the tragedies and catastrophes which have befallen the Prophet's family and its Shīᶜite followers. They further believe that this bird praises God and recites the opening chapter of the Qurᵓān. Here is a tradition related by Dāwūd al-Raqqī:[27]

We were seated at Abū ᶜAbd Allāh's place when a man passed with a slaughtered swift in his hand. Abū ᶜAbd Allāh [Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Twelver imām, d. 765 CE] immediately jumped over to him and took it out of his hand. He then spread it out on the ground... "My father told me in my grandfather's name that the Messenger of God forbade the slaughter of six species, including the swift".[28]

According to another tradition a person once asked Abū ᶜAbd Allāh about this species of bird and was told: "Do not harm them, for they do not harm anyone. This is a bird which loves us, the Prophet's family".[29] Although we are not told precisely what Shīᶜite tragedies are for which the swift grieves, clearly the imām, whom Shīᶜites credit with knowledge of the occult knowledge of the language of animals, interpreted the bird's

[26] The imām Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq relates that rock doves coo to Shīᶜites: "You are lost, you are lost" [*fuqidtum, fuqidtum*] and for this they deserve to be slaughtered. For more details on this tradition see, for example: *Baṣāᵓir al-darajāt*, p. 343 no. 7.

[27] His full name was Dāwūd b. Kathīr b. Abī Khālid al-Raqqī, a client of the Banū Asad and a companion of Mūsā, son of Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq. According to al-Ṭūsī his reports are reliable. He transmitted a number of traditions in the name of Abū ᶜAbd Allāh (Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq). However, according to some collections of biographies he was corrupt and his reports are not to be trusted. For more details see: *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd*, p. 146 no. 584, p. 452 no. 173; *Rijāl Ibn al-Ghaḍāᵓirī*, vol. 20, p. 290; *Rijāl al-Barqī*, p. 47; *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī*, p. 336 no. 5003-1; *Rijāl al-Ḥillī*, p. 67 no. 1.

[28] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, pp. 223-224 nos. 1-3; *al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 9, p. 20 no. 78; *al-Istibṣār*, vol. 4, p. 64, ch. 43 nos. 1-2; *Wasāᵓil al-shīᶜa*, vol. 23, p. 392 no. 29826, vol. 24, p. 147 no. 30205; *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, pp. 326-327 no.18; whence *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 27, p. 261 no. 3, vol. 61, pp. 265-266 no. 20; *ᶜAwālī al-laᵓālīᵓ*, vol. 2, p. 325 no. 24, vol. 3, p. 429 no. 35.

[29] *Al-Kharāᵓij wal-jarāᵓiḥ*, vol. 2, p. 609; *Wasāᵓil al-shīᶜa*, vol. 24, p. 149 no. 30210; *Mustadrak al-wasāᵓil*, vol. 16, p. 121 no. 19338-4; *Mustadrak al-safīna*, vol. 3, p. 124.

circling motions as expressing sorrow and its cries as the utterance of the first chapter of the Qurʾān. Shīᶜites thus gave the swift's peculiar circular motion a theological interpretation in keeping with their own history of tragic events.

Birds which express their love for Shīᶜism

One species of bird popular among Shīᶜites is the stock dove. The imāms recommended to their believers to grow this bird, which they believed praised God's name more than any other and loved the Prophet's family.[30] According to one tradition the imām Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq said: "The stock dove says [to the Prophet's family] 'May you be blessed, may you be blessed' [*būriktum būriktum*], so hold on to it".[31] Because this bird was believed to appreciate God's love for the Prophet's family Shīᶜites frequently gave it as a present to each other and to their imāms.[32] White roosters were believed to harbor friendly feelings towards the imāms. Thus in a tradition related in the name of Abū ᶜAbd Allāh he is quoted as saying: "The white rooster is my friend, and the friend of every believer".[33]

Here we have an imām claiming in an entirely explicit manner that white-feathered roosters are the friends of (Shīᶜite) believers.[34] According to another tradition the imām ᶜAlī was of the opinion that white roosters were more beautiful than peacocks and their voices more pleasant,[35] perhaps because of their supposed friendship towards the imāms.

Birds whose sympathy towards Shīᶜites is written on their feathers

Shīᶜite sources relate in the name of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib that the on the hoopoe's wings it is inscribed in Syriac that the family of Muḥammad (i.e. the Shīᶜites) are the best in Creation. For this reason the hoopoe has become a favorite bird among Shīᶜites, who are forbidden to kill or slaughter it. This tradition, if reliable, has the

[30] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, pp. 550-551 nos. 1-2; *Wasāʾil al-shīᶜa*, vol. 11, pp. 526-527, ch. 40 nos. 15449-15451; *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, vol. 8, pp. 290-291, ch. 33 no. 9473-1.

[31] *Al-Manāqib*, vol. 4, p. 218; *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, vol. 343 no. 7; *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 551 no. 2; whence *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 62, p. 21 no. 31.

[32] *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, p. 343 no. 7; al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, p. 294.

[33] *Al-Jāmiᶜ al-ṣaghīr*, vol. 1, pp. 659-660; *Kashf al-khafāʾ*, vol. 1, pp. 413, 422; *Rabīᶜ al-abrār*, vol. 5, p. 443.

[34] The word "believer" (*muʾmin*) among Shīᶜites refers to Muslims who follow the "true" path of Islām. It stands in contrast to the word "Muslim" which refers to Sunnīs who do not believe in the imāms. For more details see: Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, p. 146 no. 43; *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pp. 27-28 traditions 1-2.

[35] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 550 no. 3; *Wasāʾil al-shīᶜa*, vol. 11, p. 526 no. 15447.

Shīᶜites believe that ᶜAlī knew the Syriac language[36] and that God was so interested in having the virtues of the Prophet's family known that he went to the trouble of disseminating the fact among readers of that language. The purpose of such a tradition may have been to both strengthen Shīᶜites in their belief and to convince non-Shīᶜites to adopt Shīᶜism after hearing stories of this kind.

Birds which are given food and drink by virtue of the Prophet's family

It is also related of the imām ᶜAlī that he once passed through a desolate are near al-Ṣafā in Mecca where he encountered a francolin (a bird related to the partridge). ᶜAlī asked it how long it was living in that place and where it obtained food and drink. The francolin answered him: "Oh Commander of the faithful, I have been in this desolate place for one-hundred years. Whenever I pray for you [i.e. for the Prophet's family] my hunger is quelled, and whenever I curse your oppressors my thirst is quenched".[37] This tradition, which ascribes to ᶜAlī an ability to speak to birds in the manner of King Solomon, and to the francolin knowledge of the bitter fate of the adherents of Shīᶜism, constitutes an implicit call for the adoption of the Shīᶜite faith. The tradition's message is that at a time when the enemies of Shīᶜism refuse to recognize ᶜAlī's authority and do not respect the Prophet's family, this bird behaves in a manner more fitting than they, whereupon it receives its recompense from God. The truth of Shīᶜism is taken to be demonstrated here by the fact that God chose a bird to testify to that fact.

A bird predicts ᶜAlī's death and mourns him

One of the many outstanding features which Shīᶜites ascribe to their imāms is that the latter know in advance when they will die.[38] Thus it is related that ᶜAlī, before he was killed by ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam (661 CE), knew the identity of his killer and how he would be killed. On the day that he was killed some ducks quacked and when someone in the house wanted to silence them ᶜAlī said: "Leave them alone. They are in mourning".[39] According to this tradition ᶜAlī knew that he would die and also knew that the ducks were in mourning for him. This is in line

[36] Syriac is not the only language whose knowledge is ascribed to the imām. According to the beliefs of Twelver Shīᶜism their imāms know all languages, including the languages of birds and beasts. For more on this topic see, for example: Loebenstein, *Miracles*, pp. 217-218; *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, p. 343 no. 11; Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, p. 93.

[37] *Al-Yakqīn*, p. 266-267 no. 92, p. 404 no. 147; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 41, p. 235 no. 6; *al-Faḍāʾil*, p. 162.

[38] For more on this topic see, for example: Loebenstein, *Miracles*, pp. 220 ff.; Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, p. 261 no. 46.

[39] *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 425; *Maqtal amīr al-muʾminīn ᶜAlī*, p. 26.

with Shīᶜite belief, that the imām is not like ordinary mortals, since he is charged with completing the mission of the prophets. It is therefore no wonder that the Shīᶜites believe that God would make ducks mourn over him.

A white bird announces the death of Ḥusayn b. ᶜAlī

A Shīᶜite tradition states that when Ḥusayn was killed at Karbalāᵓ a white-feathered bird came and dipped its feathers in Ḥusayn's blood. It then flew towards some other birds which stood in the shade on some trees and talked about food and water. The bird covered in Ḥusayn's blood said to them: "How can you just think about the pleasures of this world while Ḥusayn's body lies on the sands of Karbalāᵓ in the burning heat?" Whereupon the birds flew to Karbalāᵓ and saw Ḥusayn's body, headless, devoid of a shroud, crushed by horses' hooves, surrounded by wild beasts, and moaned by demons in the forests. When the birds saw the state of Ḥusayn's body they landed, dipped their feathers in his blood and flew away, each in a different direction, in order to announce Ḥusayn's death to members of his family. One bird flew to al-Madīna and began circling over the Prophet's tomb with Ḥusayn's blood dripping down from his feathers. It brought the news of Ḥusayn's death to the Prophet, whereupon all the birds gathered around it and cried in mourning. When the people of al-Madīna saw the birds and the dripping blood they did not know what to make of them. But after a time the news of Ḥusayn's death reached them and they realized that the blood-dripping bird meant to inform the Messenger of God that his grandson, son of his beloved daughter Fāṭima, had been killed.

The tradition adds that at the time there lived in al-Madīna a Jew with a deaf, blind, paralyzed and leprous daughter. The Jew was in the habit of taking his sick daughter to an orchard outside the city. It happened that on the day the blood-covered bird came to the town the daughter was left overnight in the orchard. The bird also stayed in the orchard and cried. The daughter heard its cries, went over to it and joined in the weeping. A drop of blood from the bird's feathers fell on her eye and she could see again. Another drop fell on her other eye, which also healed. Drops continued falling on her until she was completely well again. In the morning her father came to the orchard and when he saw his daughter he did not recognize her. When she told him what had happened he fainted. After he awakened his daughter took him over to the bird. The Jew then said to the bird: "I swear by you and your Creator that you must speak to me". God, according to this tradition, then made the bird speak and tell the Jew the entire story of how he came with Ḥusayn's blood to al-Madīna. When the Jew heard the story he said: "God must have deemed Ḥusayn very great and important, otherwise his blood would not have healed all my

daughter's illnesses". The Jew then converted to Islam, together with his daughter and five-hundred members of his tribe.[40]

It is likely that the purpose of this tradition is to show that even a Jew believed in Ḥusayn's status and merits, while many Muslims, mainly Sunnīs, refused to believe in him.

Birds mentioned in the "Murder of Ḥusayn" literature (maqtal al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī) *and their roles*

After the dramatic death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī at the battle of Karbalāʾ Shīʿite writers began to put descriptions of the event to writing in compositions entitled *maqātil* (singular: *maqtal*, "murder").[41] The earliest extant *maqtal* was composed by Abū Mukhnaf Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā (d. 775 CE). This had an important effect on the genre's subsequent development and the main motifs which appear in writings belonging to it: the dream, the prophets, demons and angels, Jews and Christians, Ḥusayn's thirst at Karbalāʾ and nature mourning over his death. These motifs[42] appear in com-positions from very different periods and places.

Descriptions of how nature mourns the death of a leader, saint, prophet, king or god abound in folk literature. Already the ancient Babylonians wrote numerous elegies mourning the death of the vegetation and fertility god Tammuz in the name of nature, which dried up and shriveled in mourning. The Greek version of Tammuz is Adonis, of whom it is also told that vegetation died and nature itself ceased its workings upon his death.[43] Among the components of nature which in the *maqātil* literature are said to mourn the death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī birds feature prominently. Four kinds of bird are mentioned in the *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* literature: pigeons, (unspecified) birds, an owl and a vulture. Below we shall discuss each of these in turn and describe their roles.

The pigeons' curse

A Shīʿite tradition relates in the name of the sixth imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE) that pigeons of the *rāʿibiyya*[44] type curse the murderers of Ḥusayn when they

[40] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, pp. 191-193 no. 36.

[41] On the evolution of *maqātil* literature see our *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature* (Heorew).

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 150-240.

[43] Willis, *World Mythology*. It is also the Christian view that when Jesus died the world shook and became dark. For details see *Luke* 23:44-45; *Matthew* 27:21-52; Sindawi, *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature*, pp. 147-148.

[44] Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 98 no. 1; whence Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 213 no. 33; vol. 62, p. 15 no. 8; *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, vol. 11, pp. 518-519 nos. 15425-27; *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, vol. 8, p. 264 no. 9456-2; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 548 no. 13.

coo. This tradition tells that Dāwūd b. Farqad[45] sat in al-Ṣādiq's house, gazed at a *rāᶜibiyya* pigeon coop and listened to the birds' cooing. The imām asked him if he understood what the pigeons were saying. "No, I do not know", he answered. "As I am your atonement, these birds are cursing the murderers of Ḥusayn. Therefore I ask you [i.e. the Shīᶜites] to take pigeons of this type and grow them in your homes".[46]

In this tradition Shīᶜite writers utilized a well-known trait of this type of pigeon and provided it with an explanation serving their purposes: the pigeons' cooing is in fact a curse uttered against the murderers of Ḥusayn. The imām, an authoritative figure among Shīᶜites throughout his life, tells his congregation to raise such pigeons in their homes so that this curse will be heard in every Shīᶜite home.[47] Interestingly enough pigeons are reported to play a part in mourning according to Jewish tradition as well. They are said to mourn together with the Jews on the night of the Ninth of Ab, in commemoration of the Exile and the destruction of the Temple. According to Jewish sources when the Jews' lamentations reach heaven in the middle of the night a white pigeon appears and cries. According to Vilnay "every year on the eve of the Ninth of Ab one pigeon stands at the corner of the Western Wall; it will mourn all night and all the following day until evening".[48]

The mourning of the birds

Abū ᶜAbd Allāh (i.e. the imām Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq) is reported to have said: "I used to crumble seeds for the birds and they would eat from the palm of my hand. When the day of ᶜĀshūrāᵓ came, the day when Ḥusayn was killed, the birds would not eat, so I knew that they were fasting in mourning for the death of Ḥusayn b. ᶜAlī".[49]

This type of pigeon is considered as possessing a particularly powerful coo. Its name is derived from the town of Rāᶜib where it is grown. Pigeons of this type are relatively large and highly prized. For more details see: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ᶜarab*, vol. 3, p. 15, s.v. "rāᶜib"; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 1, p. 455.

45 He was a *mawlā* of the clan of Abū al-Sammāl al-Asadī al-Naṣrī, agnomen Abū Zayd, from Kūfa. He is considered a reliable transmitter who quotes the imām Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq and others. For more details on him see: Najjāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 158 no. 418; al-Kishshī, *Rijāl*, pp. 345-346 no. 640; Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, p. 336 nos. 5004-2; Barqī, *Rijāl*, pp. 32, 47; Ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl*, p. 145 nos. 582, 382; Ḥillī, *Rijāl*, p. 68 no. 2.

46 Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 98.

47 It should be noted that even today Shīᶜites, especially in villages in Iraq and Southern Lebanon, raise this type of pigeon.

48 Vilnay, *Legends of the Jews*, pp. 124-125 (Hebrew).

49 Akhṭab Khawārizm, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, p. 90.

In this tradition birds behave as if they were humans, fasting in a demonstration of mourning.[50] In other words, when a superior person dies nature is in shock, and even birds change their habits.

Owls in mourning

In a tradition transmitted by Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā[51] al-Ṣādiq explains to his acquaintances why owls cannot be seen during the day but only at night: "In the days of my grandfather the Prophet Muḥammad owls lived in houses and palaces in towns and villages. When people would sit down to eat they would throw them food. When the owls heard about Ḥusayn's death they took a vow not to live in settled places any more but only in deserts and ruins. Since then owls fast all day and mourn, and after nightfall they cry over Ḥusayn's death until dawn".[52]

Another tradition which explains why owls are only active at night is related by al-Damīrī in the name of al-Jāḥiẓ: Owls are afraid of the evil eye. They are convinced that they are the most beautiful creatures on earth they only come out at night so as not to become victims of the evil eye of other animals.[53] The former tradition shows how writers of *maqātil* took a characteristic trait of owls, the fact that they are nocturnal creatures, and gave that trait an "explanation" consistent with their aim, of showing that nature mourns the death of Ḥusayn.

In Classical Arabic poetry providing an explanation for some phenomenon is an accepted rhetorical device, called by Arab rhetoricians *ḥusn al-taʿlīl* ("conceit giving a nice explanation").[54] Authors of *maqātil* compositions transferred this

[50] Shīʿites fast on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ as a sign of mourning over the murder of Ḥusayn. See my "ʿĀshūrāʾ Day and Yom Kippur", *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, 38 (2001), pp. 208-209.

[51] His full name is Ṣafwān b. Mahrān al-Jammāl al-Asadī al-Kāhilī al-Bajalī, agnomen Abū Muḥammad. He was a *mawlā* of the Banū Kāhil tribe, well-known in Kūfa, and considered a reliable transmitter, as was his father. He relayed traditions in Jaʿfar al-Ṭādiq's name. For more details on him see: Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, p. 227 no. 3063-42; Najāshī, *Rijāl*, pp. 197-198 no. 524; Ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl*, pp. 188-189 no. 770; pp. 383-384.

[52] Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, p. 99 no. 1; whence Ibn Shahrāshūb, vol. 2, p. 314; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, pp. 213-214 nos. 34-37; vol. 61, pp. 329-330 nos. 1-3.

[53] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 232; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 61, p. 332 no. 6.

[54] This rhetorical device has a number of names in Arabic, including, *ḥusn al-taʿlīl, al-taʿlīl* and *ḥusn al-tawassul*. The Arab rhetorician Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī calls in *al-istidlāl bi-l-taʿlīl* and al-Ḥalabī uses the term *ḥusn al-tawassul*. For more details on this commonly used device of Classical Arabic poetry see: Akāwī, *al-Muʿjam al-mufaṣṣal*, pp. 392-394.

device from poetry to prose, and thus mobilized an artistic rhetorical device for the purpose of enhancing their descriptions of the mourning over Ḥusayn.

The avenging vulture

Abū Mikhnaf Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā[55] (d. 774 CE) quotes an anonymous Christian monk who converted to Islam and while on pilgrimage to Mecca told the following story to people at the *maqām Ibrāhīm* there (the spot where Abraham stood in Mecca). One day while he was in his desert cell (*ṣawmaᶜa*) he suddenly espied a large vulture landing on a rock at the seashore. It threw up a quarter of a man and flew away. A few minutes later it returned and threw up another quarter of a man. This it did four times. Then the four parts united to become a whole person, but the vulture immediately returned, cut him into four pieces, swallowed them and flew into the sky.

The monk continued his account: "I was amazed at what I had seen. When on the next day the vulture returned and again repeated his actions I came out of my cell and asked the man: 'Who are you?' He answered: 'I am the caliph Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya, the murderer of Ḥusayn b. ᶜAlī'. I asked him who Ḥusayn was and he told me that he was the grandson of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh's prayers be upon him. I then converted to Islam and came here to the Kaᶜba and to visit the Prophet's grave, may Allāh's prayers and blessings be upon him".[56]

In this tradition Abū Mikhnaf creates a connection between ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam al-Murādī (killed 661 CE), the murderer of ᶜAlī, and Yazīd the murderer of Ḥusayn, by copying the tradition about the former and ascribing it to the latter, with some minor changes.[57] Interestingly enough this tradition was put by the composers of the *maqātil* in the mouth of an anonymous Christian monk, to show that even non-Muslims transmitted it, believed it to be the truth, and converted to Islam because of the events related in it. Clearly the composers of the *maqātil* wished to convince Shīᶜites of the truth of the account.

[55] His full name is Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā al-Azdī, one of the earliest Arab historians, a friend of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the leader of the Azd tribe in Iraq and the author of some thirty compositions. For more about him see: Ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl*, p. 282 no. 1292; Sindawi, *The Maqātil in Shīᶜite Literature*, pp. 58-68; Sezgin, "Abu Miḫnaf", pp. 5 ff.

[56] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, p. 144. Note that in *maqātil* composed in modern times this story has been elaborated and new elements added to it. See, for ex., al-Ḥusaynī, *Safīnat al-najāt*, vol. 1, pp. 168-171, where the author dedicates a separate chapter to the caliph Yazīd's end, entitled *Ḥadīth halāk Yazīd* ["The story of Yazīd's death"]; see also Mughniya, *al-Majālis al-ḥusayniyya*, p. 132; and al-ᶜĀmilī, *al-Mufid*, p. 202.

[57] Al-Shabalanjī, *Nūr al-abṣār*, pp. 189-190; see also al-Fayrūzabādī, *Faḍāʾil al-khamsa*, vol. 3, pp. 87-88.

It is not by chance that the vulture was mobilized to play a part in the story. Vultures are birds of prey that can attack even human beings. The authors of the *maqātil* exploited this characteristic and added to it a mythological dimension. The vulture who cuts up Yazīd and then regurgitates him would appear to fulfill the Shīᶜites' fervent wish to avenge themselves of Yazīd. The vulture's act leads to catharsis, in the Aristotelian sense, of purification preceded by feelings of fear and pity.[58] Catharsis liberates the reader from these feelings, which filled him as he read the story. The Shīᶜite reader's involvement in the story of Ḥusayn's death and his identification with the latter's fear, sorrow and pain, demand release at the moment of climax. It is as if the composers of the *maqātil* made certain that their readers would find relief from the emotional tension they felt by this description of Yazīd's fate at the end of the story.

We should note that in the Qurʾān[59] there is a story about a bird which punishes in the context of the "Battle of the Elephant" (570 CE). Abraha, the Ethiopian governor of Yemen, built a church in Sanaa, the Yemenite capital, in order to draw the Arabs away from the Kaᶜba, the central shrine in Mecca. Abraha attacked Mecca with elephants but was forced to withdraw because God (according to the Muslim account) saved His shrine by sending in birds which looked like hawks, each of which carried three small lentil-sized stones, one in the beak and one on each leg. Every stone that hit a person killed him, and everyone else fled. Abraha himself was smitten by God and his limbs fell away from him one-by-one. His troops took him back to Sanaa, where he died after only a chick-sized part of his body was left. He did not die before his heart fell away, too.[60]

In the *maqātil*, as in the Qurʾān, a bird of prey serves as the instrument of divine punishment, used against someone who attacks a holy shrine or a holy person. In the case of the Qurʾān it is the holy shrine of the Kaᶜba, whereas in the *maqātil* it is the holy person of Ḥusayn. In the Qurʾān the hawks come in from the sea whereas in the *maqātil* the bird is a vulture. Each kind of bird punishes in a different way, in keeping with its traits and the circumstances in which the punishment is meted out. In both cases the bird, as God's messenger, torments the person who has committed the sacrilege, in the Qurʾān the man who wanted to do harm to the Kaᶜba and in the *maqātil* the caliph who gave the order to kill Ḥusayn. The authors of the *maqātil* were quite likely influenced to some degree by the Qurʾānic account.

In their use of birds to describe nature in mourning over the murder of Ḥusayn the composers of the *maqātil* enhanced the traits of pigeons, owls and vultures in order to provide an explanation which was consistent with their purpose, as this is

[58] On this concept see: Cuddon, *Literary Terms*, p. 114.

[59] Q 105:3-4.

[60] Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 44-45.

often done in Classical poetry. What was this purpose? Ḥusayn was the son of ʿAlī and the grandson of the Prophet. He was the third of the twelve imāms who lead the Muslim community after the Prophet's death. The birds were in all likelihood "mobilized" by the authors of the *maqātil* in order to convince their audience that Ḥusayn was indeed a man of surpassing virtue and merit.

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SUMMARY

In the preceding pages we saw that the Shīʿite imāms believe that God utilizes birds to help them and the Shīʿite community. For this reason they urged Shīʿite believers to treat these birds well. Among the traditions concerning such birds which we discussed were the following: there are birds which have on their wings an inscription saying that people of Muḥammad's family are the best of people; there are birds who know of God's love for the Shīʿites and their imāms; birds cry when an imām is killed and express their mourning in a number of different ways: some change their habits and others curse the murderers and swear vengeance. On the other hand, other birds are said to pray for the welfare of the Prophet's family when they are hungry, and to curse the enemies of the Shīʿites when they are thirsty, actions which apparently cause their physical discomforts to disappear.

The purpose of the many stories in which birds identify with the Shīʿite fate and recognize its worth appears to be to stress the legitimacy of the Shīʿite faith in the face of its detractors, as if to say that God Himself makes His creatures – the birds – demonstrate His love for Shīʿites while many Muslims, especially Sunnīs, consider the Shīʿites as enemies and infidels. Another possible motive behind these traditions is the desire on the part of Shīʿites to dispel some of the pain which the followers of Shīʿism have suffered over the generations.

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The Donkey of the Prophet in Shīʿite Tradition[1]

KHALID SINDAWI

ABSTRACT *The present study examines the treatment of the Prophet's mount in Shīʿite tradition. We discuss the different opinions concerning the ass's name, ʿUfayr or Yaʿfūr and present various traditions concerning utterances spoken by it, including utterances addressed to the Prophet, and other cases of human-like behaviour on its part, such as an ability to distinguish Muslims from Jews. We then go on to compare the Prophet's ass to those of other prophets, and find a number of similarities between them, in particular their ability to speak a human language. We also discuss the ass's death, which according to Shīʿite tradition was by suicide, occasioned by the ass's fear following his master's death that someone else, not a prophet, would use it as a mount. We compare the Prophet's ass to those of Noah, and Solomon's Hoopoe, and show how Shīʿite tradition has focused on similarities among them and utilized those to support the idea of the Imāmate as the Prophet's legacy in Shīʿite doctrine. We further discuss the preference which Shīʿite Imāms had for asses as against other mounts, a preference based on their wish to follow in the Prophet's footsteps.*

Keywords: *Muhammad, prophet*; *ʿUfayr (Yaʿfur), donkey of prophet Muhammad*; *Shīʿism*; *Noah–biblical figure*; *Solomon–biblical figure*

The author of *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā* says of the donkey that it will not lose its way after having once walked on a certain path, that it is sharp of hearing, patient, capable of performing hard work and undertaking difficult journeys, rarely ill and heals easily, and eats less, needs less, works more and is smarter than most other pack animals: "It prevents its master from taking a wrong step and falling into mischief; by braying it warns him that the devil is standing in the way, calls on God for protection against him, and puts its master on his guard".[2] To this others have added that donkeys are the cleanest of all hairy beasts, that they are free of fleas, and that they are affable, good-tempered, composed and contemplative. They love their master even if the latter mistreats them, recognize him by smell from afar,

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[1]The word *Shīʿite* in this article refers exclusively to the Imāmi version of Shīʿism.
[2]Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā l-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā* (Tehran: Nāṣir Khasrū Publications), 1: 339.

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know where they have stayed in the past, possess strong senses of smell and hearing, and never stumble twice on the same spot, just like a wise man who takes care not to repeat his mistakes. Some have described the donkey as a model of sagacity and prudence, for it refuses to trust any unfamiliar source of water and will not drink it before testing it in many ways.[3] It is thus not surprising that asses, in particular the females of the species, have served as the mounts of prophets.[4] They are symbols of peace, poverty, modesty, patience and courage. In the Old Testament and the Gospel they enjoy a prominent position. Thus Samuel struck the ground looking for the lost donkeys;[5] Balaam learned much from the she-donkey that was able to show him where the angel of Yahweh stood;[6] it was on the back of a donkey that Joseph[7] took Mary[8] and Jesus[9] to safety; it was on a donkey that Christ entered Jerusalem in victory;[10] when Abraham[11] asked Sara[12] for permission to visit Ishmael[13] she gave it on condition that he not stay overnight with her and that he remain on his donkey;[14] Jeremiah[15] left Nebuchadnezzar[16] on a donkey after the king had been killed;[17] and "Rabbinical Jewish writings provide clear references to the awaited Messiah, son of David/son of Joseph as coming on an ass and, in a few Midrashic commentaries it is even said that this would be the same ass which Abraham and Moses used to ride".[18]

In Islam mounts and beasts of burden are also the riding animals used by prophets, and by the Shī'ites' infallible Imāms, both during their lives and on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, according to one tradition the Prophet Muḥammad will ride the *Burāq* on the Day of Judgment.[19]

[3]*Nabāhat al-hayawān*, translated from English by S. Ṭ (Beirut: Dār Ibn Zaydūn, 1980), pp. 244–246.
[4]For further details on this matter see S. Bashear, "Riding beasts on divine mission: An ass and camel tradition", *Journal of Semitic Studies,* 36, i (1991): 37–75.
[5]See E.G. Hirsch, "Samuel", *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901), XII: 5–8.
[6]Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', 1984; fourth edition), XIII: 378; for a detailed discussion of the story of Balaam and his ass see R.W.L. Moberly, "On learning to be a true prophet: The story of Ballaam and his ass", in *New Heaven and New Earth: Prophecy and the Millennium*, ed. P.J. Harland & C.T.R. Hayward (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 1999), pp. 1–17 (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. LXXVII).
[7]See M.W. Montgomery, "Joseph", *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901), VI: 246–253.
[8]See A.J. Wensinck-[Penelope Johnstone], "Maryam", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991, second edition), VI: 628–632.
[9]See G.C. Anawati, "'Īsā", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990, second edition), IV: 81–86.
[10]Matthew 21: 1–6, John 12: 14–15, Luke 19: 28–35.
[11]See R. Paret, "Ibrāhīm", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986, second edition), III: 980–981.
[12]See A. Rippin, "Sāra", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 26–27.
[13]See R. Paret, "Ismā'īl", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 184–185.
[14]Al-Rāwindī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, 112, quoted in al-Majlisī, II: 85, 12: 112.
[15]See G. Vajda, "Irmiya", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 79.
[16]See E. Davis, "Nebuchadnezzar", *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1917), XII: 912–918, in Islam: p. 916.
[17]Ni'mat Allāh al-Jazā'irī, *Al-Nūr al-mubīn fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā' wa l-murāsalīn* (Qumm: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-Mar'ashī l-Najafī, 1984), p. 427; 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (Qumm: Mu'assasat Dār al-Kitāb, 1984; third edition), I: 90; both quoted in al-Majlisī, II: 85, XIV: 360.
[18]*Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Sanhedrin (London, 1969), pp. 98b–99a; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (London, 1916), pp. 224–225; L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1969): II: 327; M.D. Gross, *Ozar ha-Agada* (Jerusalem, 1965), I: 401–402.
[19]On al-Burāq see R. Paret, "Burāḳ", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986; second edition), I: 1310–1311.

According to another *ḥadīth* the prophets will be resurrected on the backs of mounts, Ṣāliḥ[20] on his she-camel[21] and Fāṭima[22] the Prophet's daughter on her father's she-camel *al-'Aḍbā'*; the Mahdī when he appears at the end of time will be riding "the mount of the earth" (*dābbat al-arḍ*),[23] and the "imposter" (*dajjāl*) will ride a whitish donkey whose step is a mile long and covers great distances quickly.[24]

Riding a donkey would appear to have been a characteristic feature of Old Testament prophets, one which Islam also shared, so that the Prophet Muḥammad was described as riding donkeys, in addition to horses, she-camels and mules,[25] for the purpose of confirming his prophetic status as an equal to the Hebrew prophets.[26] On the following pages we shall describe and analyze the way in which the Prophet's ass is dealt with in the sources of Shī'ite tradition. The paper will show how this tradition tried to ascribe to the Prophet's ass a connection to the concept of prophetic legacy in Shī'ite theology, an ancient concept which it claims goes back to the days of Noah.

The Prophet's Donkey: its Name and Origins

Shī'ite sources disagree among each other as to the name of the Prophet's donkey, variously using the names 'Ufayr and Ya'fūr.[27] According to some these are the names of two different asses, but the majority are agreed that both names refer to one and the same animal.

The Meanings of the Donkey's Names

'Ufayr: This is a diminutive of disrespect derived from *a'far* (= dust-coloured), which is itself derived from *'ufra* (= dust). Ya'fūr: The name means a (dust-coloured) gazelle or, according to some, a gazelle cub, and was given to the Prophet's ass to describe both its colour and the way it ran.[28]

[20]On Ṣāliḥ see A. Rippin, "Ṣāliḥ", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995; second edition), VIII: 984.

[21]For details on Ṣāliḥ's she-camel see, for example, 'Abd al-Mālik b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Tha'ālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb fī l-muḍāf wa l-mansūb*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977), pp. 29–31, 45, 352.

[22]See L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Fāṭima", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986; second edition), I: 841–850.

[23]For details on *dābba* see A.S. Fulton, "Dābba", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986; second edition), I: 884.

[24]Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, also known as al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa tamām al-ni'ma* (Qumm: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1975; second edition), II: 527.

[25]The Prophet had a number of horses, five according to some, more according to others. For details concerning the Prophet's horses and their names see Ibn Juzay al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-khayl*, ed. Muḥammad al-'Arabī l-Khiṭābī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), p. 89; see also Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Munammaq* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), p. 406. The prophet also possessed three she-camels: al-'Aḍbā', al-Qaṣwā' and Duldul. For details concerning them see 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Jawzī, *Al-Wafā bi-aḥwāl al-muṣṭafā*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985). The prophet also had three mules, called Al-Iyliyya, Faḍḍa and Duldul.

[26]See Bashear, 37.

[27]See, for example, J. Ruska, "Ḥimār", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989; second edition), III: 393b.

[28]Al-Majlisī, XVI: 97, 127–128.

The Donkey's Origin

There exist three different traditions concerning the origins of the Prophet's donkey.

Tradition A.[29] One tradition has it that al-Muqawqis,[30] master of Alexandria, sent the Prophet the donkey Ya'fūr as a present with the Prophet's envoy to him, Ḥāṭib b. Abū Balta'a[31] (d. 30/650). The ass was one of a number of gifts he sent to the Prophet, which included also a she-mule known later by the name of Duldul, and four slave girls, including Māriya the Copt,[32] mother of Ibrāhīm, and her sister Sīrīn, mother of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥassān b. Thābit al-Anṣārī (d. 55/674).

Tradition B.[33] This tradition relates that Farwa[34] b. 'Amr al-Judhāmī, who worked for the Byzantines, converted to Islam and sent the Prophet a letter informing him of this. This letter he sent with a man named Mas'ūd b. Sa'd in the year 10/631, with whom he also sent a she-mule called Faḍḍa, a horse, a donkey named 'Ufayr, as well as some fine garments, following which the Prophet accepted his conversion to Islam and wrote to him to that effect.[35]

Tradition C.[36] According to this tradition the Prophet took a black donkey as spoil in the attack on Khaybar[37] (628). The donkey recognized the Prophet, who asked it what its name was. The donkey answered that it was Yazīd b. Shihāb[38]. The donkey then told the Prophet:

> God gave my ancestor sixty[39] descendants, which none but prophets rode, and now of my ancestor's progeny none is left but myself, and of

[29]For details on this tradition see al-Majlisī, XXI: 45, 47 no. 3; cf. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Muḥabbar*, ed. I. Lichten (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, nd), p. 67; cf. also Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib 'alayhim al-salām* (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-'Alāma lil-Nashr, 1960), I: 169.

[30]See K. Ohrnberg, "al-Muḳawḳis", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993; second edition), III: 511–513.

[31]See Jawād 'Alī, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī ta'rīkh al-'arab qabla l-Islām* (Baghdad: Baghdad University Press, 1993; third edition), VI: 432.

[32]See F. Buhle, "Mariyā", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991; second edition), V: 575; Muḥammad al-Tawnajī, *Mu'jam a'lām al-nisā'* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1989), p. 163; Al-'Asqalānī, *Al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*, I: 520–521.

[33]For details concerning this tradition see b. Shahrāshūb, I: 168–169, quoted in al-Majlisī, XXI: 375, 408–409, LXI: 195.

[34]In some versions of this tradition the name is 'Umar and not 'Amr; for details see b. Shahrāshūb, I: 168, 171; Al-Majlisī, XVI: 107, XXI: 375, LXI: 195.

[35]The tradition goes on to relate that when the Byzantine emperor learned of Farwa's conversion to Islam he summoned him and demanded that he retract. When Farwa refused the emperor put him in prison and then took him out and had him killed and crucified. For additional details see Al-Majlisī, XXI: 409.

[36]For more details concerning this tradition see Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī, *Al-Kharā'ij wa l-jarā'iḥ* (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1989; third edition) I: 42; 'Alī b. Yūnis al-Nabāṭī l-Bayāḍī, *Al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm ilā mustaḥiqq al-taqdīm* (Al-Najaf: Al-Maktaba l-Ḥaydariyya, 1965; first edition), I: 53; al-Rāwandī, 312, no. 387; al-Majlisī, XVI: 100, XVII: 404; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭarīḥī, *Majma' al-baḥrayn*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm: Maktabat Nashr al-Thaqāfa l-Islāmiyya, miyya, 1986; second edition), II: 207.

[37]For details concerning the attack on Khaybar see C.E. Bosworth, "Khaybar", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 1137–1143.

[38]According to some sources the name was 'Amr b. Shihāb. For details see Aḥmad Ṭughrul Bey, *al-Nuṭq al-mafhūm min ahl al-ṣamt al-ma'lūm* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'a l-Wahbiyya, 1864), p. 82.

[39]Seventy according to Ṭughrul Bey, 82.

> the prophets none but you. I was waiting for you [to ride me]. Before you I belonged to a Jew whom I made fall off me on purpose, and who as a result beat my belly[40] and my back". Then the Prophet said: "I will name you Ya'fūr"[41] and asked it if it had a desire for females and was answered no.

From these three different traditions concerning the origins of the Prophet's donkey we may conclude that in fact he may have possessed two, one called 'Ufayr which was given to him by Farwa b. 'Amr al-Judhāmī, and another, Ya'fūr, concerning whose origins there is a dispute between those who maintain that it came from the spoils of Khaybar and those who claim that it was a gift from al-Muqawqis.

The issue of the origins of the Prophet's donkey cannot be decided from within the various sources, and thus remains unresolved. Whatever the fact of the matter, what is of significance for our purposes here is: (a) The fact that the donkey from Khaybar spoke to the Prophet after the latter had taken him as booty; (b) The ultimate fate of the Prophet's donkey. Below we shall deal separately with each of these two matters and then explain how Shī'ite tradition tried to use each of these issues to further its religious ideology.

The Ability of the Donkey to Speak and its Conversation with the Prophet

Before dealing with the Prophet's speaking donkey specifically, we would like to briefly survey the way the motif of talking donkeys is treated in Islamic literature. Islamic traditions contain numerous examples of talking donkeys who speak to their masters intelligibly using human language. Aḥmad Ṭughrul Bey included in his distinguished book *al-Nuṭq al-mafhūm min ahl al-ṣamt al-ma'lūm*[42] a number of traditions[43] in which donkeys speak. Shī'ite tradition also contains stories about talking donkeys. From an examination of such traditions the following generalisations can be established:

a. What the donkey says is uttered in perfectly intelligible human language.
b. Usually it is the donkey's owner who induces the donkey to speak, although in some cases the donkey speaks entirely of its own accord.
c. Generally the people to whom donkeys speak are prophets, Imāms or other saintly people. The donkey's utterance usually has the purpose of drawing

[40]Another source has "famished my belly". For details see al-Rāwandī, I: 42.
[41]According to a number of sources the name is al-Ya'fūr. See al-Nabāṭī, I: 53.
[42]Ṭughrul Bey quotes four traditions in which donkeys speak. These are the following: the case of the Prophet's ass that spoke to the Prophet at Khaybar; Balām's donkey that refused its master's demand to take him to curse Moses; the she-donkey of Ḥalīma l-Sa'diyya the Prophet's wet nurse, which spoke in praise of the Prophet while he was being nursed; and the donkey of Abū Sulaymān which advised its master against a journey which he was considering. I would like to thank Prof. J. Sadan of Tel-Aviv University for drawing my attention to this important book.
[43]For details concerning these traditions see b. Shahrāshūb, I: 93; Al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, *Tafsīr al-Imām al-'Askarī* (Qumm: Madrasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1989; first edition), pp. 97–98, quoted in al-Majlisī, XVII: 304–307; al-Rāwandī, 173, quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār*, XIII: 307.

attention to a miracle[44] (in the case of a prophet or Imām) or a virtuous trait or deed[45] (in the case of a saint).

d. Occasionally the utterance has the purpose of announcing the appearance of a prophet, or of proving a wronged prophet right.
e. In the case of a saint the donkey speaks when the two are alone. No one else ever hears what it says; the donkey's speech is an aspect of the grace shown the saint.
f. At the time of the donkey's speech its owner sits on its back, either at the outset of a journey or on the road.
g. The donkey at times objects to the path chosen by its master, especially if the latter is engaged in an objectionable activity such as opposing a prophet or wronging a saint.
h. Sometimes the speaking donkey expresses its gladness that its master or rider is about to become a prophet.
i. A speaking donkey destined to serve a prophet will refuse to be the property of anyone else. If despite this it comes to be owned by someone who is not a prophet it will rebel against its master and refuse to let him ride it; when the prophet dies, the donkey will commit suicide from grief so that no one else will ride it after the prophet.
j. A speaking donkey knows and understands its master's wishes and intentions and will act accordingly.
k. A speaking donkey will testify against its non-believing master[46] and will throw such a person off its back. Thus, for example, when Ka'b al-Ashraf[47] came to the Prophet on a donkey's back the donkey threw him off, reared up and struck his head. Then the donkey said to him: "You miserable slave, you witnessed the miracles of God and yet did not believe". Then the Prophet said [to Ka'b]: "Your donkey is better than you; it refused to let you ride, nor will you ever ride it again". Then Thābit b. Qays[48] bought the donkey for one-hundred dinars, and when he rode it and came to the Prophet on it, it was gentle and courteous, and protected him from harm.

[44]What is unique about Shī'ite attitude toward miracles (*mu'jiza*) is that it ascribes the ability to perform *mu'jizāt* to imāms as well as to prophets. For details see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism I Islam*, translated by D. Streight (New York, 1994), p. 91; Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-maqālāt fi l-madhāhib wa l-mukhtārāt* (Tabrīz, 1951), pp. 40–41.

[45]For the differences between miracles (*mu'jiza*) and grace (*karāma*) see L. Gardet, "Karāma", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 615–616; E. Geoffroy, "Attitudes contrastées des mystiques musulmans face au miracle", in: *Miracle et karama: hagiographies médiévales comparés*, ed. D. Aigle, 2000, II: 301–316; R. Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes: Theologien und Erscheinungsformen des islamischen Heiligenwunders* [Freiburger Islamstudien, XI] (Wiesbaden, 1987): 16f; J. Lobenstein, "Miracles in ši'i thought: A case study of the miracles attributed to Imām Ga'far al-Sadiq", *Arabica*, 2 (2003): 202–211; A.J. Wensinck, "Mu'djiza", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993; second edition), VII: 295.

[46]Al-'Askarī, 95–97, quoted in al-Majlisī, XVII: 304–307; B. Shahrāshūb, I: 93.

[47]See W. Montgomery Watt, "Ka'b b. al-Ashraf", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 315.

[48]See Taqīyy al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Teheran: Mu'assasat al-Nashr, Teheran University, 1964), p. 433, no. 84; Al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (also known as the 'Allāma al-Ḥillī), *Rijāl al-'allāma l-Ḥillī* (Qumm: Dār al-Dhakhā'ir, 1991), p. 29, no. 11.

In view of the preceding examples, it will not surprise us to see the Prophet's donkey, and, as we shall see below, Noah's ass as well, speak.

Shī'ite writers thus possessed abundant precedents for speaking asses, which they could adopt and modify to fit Shī'ite beliefs.

In the account of the Prophet's speaking ass represented by Tradition C above, in which the donkey was taken as booty by the Prophet in the attack on Khaybar in the year 7/628, it was the Prophet who initiated the dialogue with the captured donkey by asking it what its name was. The donkey then answered that its name was Yazīd b. Shihāb. The Prophet then changed its name to Ya'fūr and asked it if it desired females, whereupon the donkey answered that it did not. After that the donkey informed the Prophet that it was the last of sixty donkeys of a line of donkeys destined to serve prophets and that before it fell into the Prophet's hands it had been the property of a Jew whom it had toppled off and who had then beaten and starved it.

Notice that throughout this relatively lengthy dialogue between the Prophet Muḥammad and his ass, (a) the latter's speech is perfectly intelligible to the Prophet, (b) the donkey is aware of belonging to a line of donkeys destined to serve prophets, and (c) it is joyful that fate has made the Prophet its owner. So while it is true that the donkey is outwardly inconspicuous and looks like any other member of its species, in fact it is made clear that internally it differs from them and in fact possesses some of its master's characteristics: it is party to divine secrets, pleased with belonging to the Prophet as if it were part of the prophetic message, distinguishes between Jew and Muslim and like any human being attributes to prophets the ability to perform miracles and supernatural acts and to make any object, living or inanimate, subservient to them, including the donkey itself.

The Death of the Prophet's Donkey

All the traditional sources are agreed that Ya'fūr committed suicide the moment the Prophet passed away, out of grief over the latter's death, as if it had made a pact with itself never to let anyone else ride it, since it was destined for the Prophet only and constituted part of his mission. Now once the Prophet was dead, his mission was at an end and his donkey realized this and understood that its own mission also came to end at the same time as that of its master. That is why it committed suicide as soon as the Prophet Muḥammad, "the Seal of the Prophets", died, making his donkey also the "Seal of the prophets' donkeys".

There is disagreement among various sources as to the method and place of the suicide in question. Al-Kulaynī[49] has this to say on the matter:

> 'Ufayr died in the hour in which the Prophet of God died; it cut off its halter at Qubā'[50] and then threw itself down into it, so that it became its grave.

[49]Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* (Teheran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1946; fourth edition) I: 237, no. 9, quoted by al-Majlisī, XXII: 457.

[50]The name of a well at the home of Thawba b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Sā'ib b. Abū Lubāba, which gave its name also to the village in which it was located. For further details see Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1979) IV: 301–302; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Ḥimyarī, *Al-Rawḍ al-mi'ṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1984; second edition), pp. 452–453; M. Lecker, *Muslims, Jews and Pagans: Study on Early Islamic Medina* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), p. 133.

According to another tradition the Prophet's ass killed itself in a well belonging to Abū l-Haytham b. al-Tayhān[51] (d. 28/648) and the well became its grave.[52]

The Deaths of the Prophet's Donkey and al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī's Horse[53]

In light of the significant role played by the Prophet's donkey from the day it came into his possession until it committed suicide, the Shī'ites created a link between it and al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī's horse which was killed in a dramatic fashion by the Umayyads at the battle of Karbalā'[54] (61/680). Elements of the "story of the Prophet's donkey's end" were woven into a story about the death of al-Ḥusayn's horse[55] at Karbalā' in order to demonstrate that the characteristics and fates of mounts of the prophets and Imāms had much in common with those of their masters. Indeed, the horse which Ḥusayn had inherited from his grandfather the Prophet behaved in the battle of Karbalā' like a human being, fighting bravely alongside Ḥusayn and killing a number of the enemy. At the end of the battle, after Ḥusayn had been killed, his horse is reported to have neighed, surveyed the dead among Ḥusayn's companions,[56] wet its forelock with Ḥusayn's blood and run to the tent of Ḥusayn's wives to inform them that he had been killed. After that the Umayyad forces tried to capture it but it escaped, ran into the Euphrates and drowned itself. Some sources even add that the horse will be resurrected with Ḥusayn and the "Lord of Time" (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*)[57] or Mahdī. By stressing that (a) Ḥusayn had inherited his horse from his grandfather the Prophet, (b) it committed suicide after Ḥusayn's death and it would not permit anyone else to ride it, Shī'ite

[51]See Ibn Dāwūd, 406, no. 95; al-Ḥillī, 189, no. 21; Ibn al-Ḥabīb, 268; Aḥmad b. Abī 'Abd Allāh al-Burqī, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Teheran: Mu'assasat al-Nashr, Teheran University, 1964), p. 64; Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1995), p. 86, no. 867–1.

[52]Al-Rawandī, I: 42; al-Majlisī, XVII: 416.

[53]See L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Ḥusayn b. 'Ali b. 'Abū Ṭālib", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986; second edition), III: 607–615.

[54]For details about Karbalā' see E. Honigmann, "Karbala'", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990; second edition), IV: 637–639. For details about the battle of Karbalā' see 'Abū Mikhnaf (Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā), *Kitāb maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, translated by Hamid Mavani (Montreal, 2002), p. 65f; H.M. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (London, New-York, Beirut: Longman, 1979), pp. 174–221.

[55]Shī'ite sources disagree on the name of al-Ḥusayn's horse. Thus Abū Mikhnaf gives its name as Maymūn, whereas Akhṭab Khawārizm gives it as al-Murtajaz. For details see Abū Mikhnaf (Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā), *Kitāb maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, ed. 'Umar Abū l-Naṣr (Beirut, 1971), p. 48; Akhṭab Khawārizm (Al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Bakrī l-Makkī al-Ḥanafī), *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* (Najaf: Maṭba'at al-Zahrā', 1948): 38; Kh. Sindāwī, *The Maqātil in Shī'ite Literature*, Ph.D. dissertation (Hebrew) (Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel, 2000), p. 11.

[56]In all seventy-two men accompanied Ḥusayn from al-Madīna to Karbalā', fought at his side and were killed to the last man. The Shī'ites call them also *Anṣār al-Ḥusayn*. Numerous biographies of these "helpers" have been compiled, among them: Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Anṣār al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: International Institute, 1996); 'Alī Muḥammad Dukhayyil, *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Tayyār al-Jadīd, 1985); Muḥammad b. al-Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Samāwī, *Ibṣār al-'ayn fī Anṣār al-Ḥusayn 'alayhi al-salām* (Qumm: Maktabat Baṣīratī, nd).

[57]The appelation of the twelfth imām, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, who disappeared in Samirrā' in 261/874. He is also known by the following names: al-Qā'im, al-Mahdī, al-Muntaẓar, Ḥujjat Allāh and Abū l-Qāsim. For details concerning the twelfth imām see, for example, J.G.J. Ter Haar, "Muhammad al-Ḳā'im", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993; second edition), VII: 443; Amir-Moezzi, 175, no. 235.

tradition emphasizes the special nature of this horse, whom only prophets or Imāms could ride and no one else, certainly not the enemies of the Imām!

In the Euphrates River, which is holy to the Shī'ites,[58] the horse finds a haven. There it can commit suicide and stay for the "interval" (*barzakh*)[59] until it becomes resurrected at the end of time. Just as the Prophet's donkey drowned itself in a well, so Ḥusayn's horse drowns itself in the water of the Euphrates. Water, the symbol of purification, would thus appear to play an important role in protecting the mortal remains of the mounts of prophets and Imāms during the "interval" in which they await their resurrection at the end of time together with their masters. Their disappearance under water may also hint at the idea of the twelfth Imām's "absence" (*ghayba*),[60] which began in the year 261/874 and is due to end with the Imām's reappearance as the Mahdī who will fill the earth with justice just as now it is filled with iniquity. It would thus seem that Shī'ite writers were trying to link the suicides of the Prophet's donkey and Ḥusayn's horse with the idea of the "absence", by having both mounts come back at the end of time, when their masters would ride them again. In short, prophets' and Imāms' mounts share some of their masters' characteristics and are themselves qualitatively different from their more run-of-the-mill brethren.

How is the Prophet's Donkey related to Noah's Donkey[61] and King Solomon's Hoopoe?[62]

On seeing this question the reader may well wonder what possible link there can be between animals separated by many centuries from each other such as the above, and between a land beast such as an ass and the hoopoe, a bird.

The answer lies in the efforts made by Shī'ite writers to prove the superiority of their brand of Islam over all others and to demonstrate its legitimacy and worthiness as a religious faction. In order to do this they delved into the earliest history of mankind, focusing in particular on stories about prophets whose beliefs they were able to prove were consistent with their own. In fact, they went on to claim that many of these ancient prophets were *bona fide* Shī'ites, and that Shī'ite Islam is no more than a natural extension of ancient Shī'ism.[63] Indeed, attempts were made to show that the prophets and their heirs shared common characteristics and traits with members of the Prophet Muḥammad's family (*ahl al-bayt*). Among

[58]Cf. Kh. Sindāwī, "The cult of the Euphrates river and its significance among Shi'ites", *Der Islam* 81(2004): 249–69.

[59]For details on *barzakh* see B. Carra de Vaux, "Barzakh", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986; second edition), I: 1071–1072.

[60]For more details on the "absent" imām among imāmī Shī'ites see Amir-Moezzi, 108–114; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New-Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1985), Ch. 8; H. Halm, *Die Schia* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), Ch. 4.

[61]See C.E. Bosworth, "Nūḥ", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995; second edition), III: 108–110.

[62]J. Walker – [P. Fenton], "Sulaymān b. Dāwūd", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997; second edition), IX: 822–824.

[63]For an excellent treatment of this subject see E. Kohlbeg, "Some Shi'i views of the antediluvian world", *Studia Islamica*, 52 (1980): 41–66.

such shared features were the birds and the beasts belonging to each of these two groups, as will be demonstrated by the following two examples.

Example A: Noah's Donkey and the Prophet's Donkey

Shī'ite writers found a link between the ass of Noah and that of the Prophet. What unites the two, despite the great time difference between them, is a common ancestry: the Prophet's donkey is seen as belonging to a line of donkeys belonging to prophets. These donkeys and their descendents were bequeathed from prophet to prophet, from Adam down to Muḥammad, the last of the prophets.

In a tradition ascribed to Abū 'Abd Allāh [i.e., the sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq[64] (d. 148/765)] he says:

> There was an ass with Noah in the ark. Noah came up to it and polished its saddle. The [ass] then said 'From the loins of this ass an ass will be born whom the master and seal of the prophets will ride; I thank God for having made me this ass'.[65]

In this tradition Noah's donkey speaks to its master and appears to know both the identity of future prophets and the fact that its descendants will ride these prophets in turn, all the way to the last ass who will belong to the last prophet. The ass would seem to possess knowledge of the occult and be capable of prophesizing the future, and Noah, being a prophet himself and as such able to perform miracles, understands the ass's speech.

In order to place this tale within a context and provide it with credibility Shī'ite tradition has ascribed to Muḥammad's donkey an utterance on the occasion of its having been taken as spoil by the Prophet in the attack on Khaybar, in which it confirms what its progenitor, Noah's donkey, said.

Example B: King Solomon's Hoopoe and the Prophet's Donkey

The hoopoe is a favourite bird of Shī'ite scholars, who forbid killing it. In a tradition whose chain of authorities goes back to the Imāms it is related in various versions that "on every wing of the hoopoe it is written in Syriac: 'The family of Muḥammad is the best in creation'".[66] The hoopoe belonging to Solomon is considered special by Shī'ites. Its name was Ya'fūr,[67] like the name of one of

[64]See M.G.S. Hodgson, "Dja'far al-Ṣādiḳ", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991; second edition), III: 374–375.

[65]Al-Kulaynī, I: 237, no. 9, quoted by al-Majlisī, XVII: 405, no. 23.

[66]*Ibid.* VI: 224, no. 1; Al-Shaykh al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn), *Wasā'il al-shī'a* (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-Bayt li-Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1989), XXIII: 394, no. 29833; al-Majlisī, XXVII: 261, no. 1; LXI: 383, no. 45; Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūwsī, *Al-Amālī* (Qumm: Dār al-Thaqāfa lil-Nashr, 1994): 350, no. 724–764; Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī (Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, also known as Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq), *'Uyūn akhbār al-riḍā* (Teheran: Dār al-'Ālam lil-Nashr (Jīhān, 1958) I: 261, no. 20.

[67]Al-Majlisī, XIV: 129; LXI: 285; al-Jazā'irī, 379.

the Prophet's donkeys and it was, together with Solomon's ant, one of the world's wonders.[68]

What is particularly germane to our discussion is the fact that Solomon's hoopoe was named Ya'fūr. This is certainly no coincidence. Rather, it constitutes an attempt by Shī'ite writers to create a link between Solomon and the Prophet. It is as if to say that the Prophet inherited the name of his donkey from Solomon's hoopoe and gave it to his ass in order to preserve the legacy handed down from one prophet to another in an intact chain beginning with Adam and ending with 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib (35–40/656–661), the Prophet Muḥammad's proper heir.

The legacy acquired by the heir of each prophet consisted of many things, including identical names for the beasts which they owned and knowledge of their language. Thus Solomon often spoke to his hoopoe, Muḥammad spoke to his donkey when he took possession of it at Khaybar, and Noah spoke to his donkey when it entered his ark, as we saw above.

In emulation of the prophets Shī'ite Imāms preferred riding on donkeys

Shī'ite Imāms preferred asses to other mounts, in emulation of the prophets and their humble behaviour.[69] In particular they imitated the way the Prophet Muḥammad climbed on his donkey, so that when an Imām's donkey swaggered its master would abase himself and place his head on the saddlebow.

In a tradition handed down in the name of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Aṭā' al-Makkī[70] the latter says:

> The Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq summoned me after he had saddled a mule and a donkey and asked me if I was willing to accompany him on his affairs. I said 'yes'. He then asked me which of the two mounts I preferred and I answered 'the donkey'. He said: 'I prefer the donkey'. Then we went on our way and as he was speaking with us he was thrown face down onto his saddle for quite some time. When he raised his head I said: 'I see that you are uncomfortable with the saddle. If you would only take the mule'. He answered: 'Certainly not. Even if the donkey were to swagger I would do as the Prophet of God did. He rode a donkey named 'Ufayr which swaggered, and so he [the Prophet] placed his head on the saddlebow, yes indeed. Then he raised his head and said, Oh God, this is the work of

[68]Among the other wonders of the world according to Shī'ite belief are the following: the dog of the Seven Sleepers, 'Uzayr's ass, al-Sāmirī's calf, Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, Ishmael's ram, Jona's whale, Noah's crow, 'Aws b. Ahnān's wolf and 'Alī's sword (*dhū l-faqār*). For details see Ibn Shahrāshūb, III: 267, quote;also by al-Majlisī, XXXIX: 82.

[69]Al-Mīrzā Ḥasan al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il* (Qumm: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1988) VIII: 268, nos. 9415–9421. Among the Shī'ite imāms reported to have used asses as their mounts are 'Alī b. Mūsā l-Riḍā (d. 203/818), Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 95/713). For details see al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, XV: 277; al-Majlisī, XLVII: 21; LXXII: 130; LXXXIII: 201; Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Farrūkh al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* (Qumm: Manshūrāt Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-'Uẓmā l-Mar'ashī l-Najafī, 1984): 495; Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma* (Qumm: Dār al-Dhakhā'ir lil-Maṭbū'āt, 1963), pp. 156, 187.

[70]See al-Kishshī, *Rijāl*, 215, no. 385; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 228, no. 601.

'Ufayr, not mine'".[71] And the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir[72] (d. 732) is quoted as saying: "My favourite mounts are donkeys".[73]

The preceding two traditions indicate that the Imāms preferred asses to other mounts, in emulation of the prophets and especially in imitation of the Prophet Muḥammad and his humble behaviour toward his mount, which went so far as to ask God to forgive the beast for its misbehaviour.

Riding an ass is thus a characteristic feature of prophets and also of Imāms. In fact, the latter were careful to emulate the prophets' behaviour in many respects.[74]

Summary

In the preceding pages we saw that donkeys were the favoured mounts of prophets and Imāms and that riding an ass was a sign of a prophet or an Imām and evidence of their humility. The Prophet Muḥammad was not different from the other prophets in this respect. His donkey, whatever its name and origins, spoke with the Prophet just as the asses of other prophets did, and in the end committed suicide by drowning in a well after the Prophet's death.

Shī'ite tradition drew on certain details of the story of the Prophet's donkey and produced links to its own ideology. Thus it connected the fates of the Prophet's donkey and al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī's horse, and also used Noah's donkey and Solomon's hoopoe, to prove that all the prophets' mounts and birds had certain features in common and that donkeys were part of a legacy which began with Adam and will end with the last Shī'ite Imām, Muḥammad al-Qā'im (disappeared at Sāmarrā' in the year 261/874), a legacy in which the Prophet's donkey was one link in a chain.

[71]Al-Kishshī, 215–216, no. 386, quoted by al-Majlisī, LXI: 200, no. 47; LXXIII: 291, no. 14; LXXIII: 300, no. 40; al-Nūrī, VIII: 265, no. 9410–9411; al-Āmilī, XI: 489–490, no. 15344; al-Kulaynī, VIII: 276, no. 417; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī, *Al-Maḥāsin* (Qumm: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1951; second edition), II: 352, no. 41; Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd al-'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, ed. Hāshim Rasūlī l-Maḥallātī (Teheran: al-Maṭba'a l-Ilmiyya, 1960), II: 285, no. 41.

[72]See E. Kohlberg, "Muhammad b. 'Alī Zayn al-'Abidīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993; second edition), VII: 397–400.

[73]Raḍī l-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarsī, *Makārim al-akhlāq* (Qumm: Dār al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1992; fourth edition), p. 265.

[74]For more details concerning similarities between imāms and prophets see, for example, M.H. Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1977), pp. 185–186.

THOSE DEVOTED

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Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya: The Woman and her Role in Early Shīʿite History

KHALID A. SINDAWI

ABSTRACT *The purpose of the present study is to analyse the role played by an important female figure in early Shīʿite history. The person in question is Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya, the servant-girl of Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter. After a long period of neglect by scholars, who have focused on what to their mind were figures of greater import, we shall here attempt to describe the role played by Fiḍḍa in early Shīʿite history by way of analysing her biography and her close relations with Fāṭima and members of the latter's family (ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn). We shall further describe what has been reported of Fiḍḍa's personality, her family, her admiration for the Prophet's family, Qurʾānic verses which supposedly mention her, and the great respect in which she was held by Fāṭima's family.*

Keywords: Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya; Early Shīʿite history; Muslim women; Miracle; *Karāma*; *Muʿjiza*; Fāṭima, daughter of Muḥammad; Qurʾān exegesis

Modern Western historically-oriented writings on women at the dawn of Islam focus to a great extent on the women in the Prophet's family because of their function as role-models for the behaviour of Muslim women.[1] However, although the Islamic sources for the period in question mention numerous other well-known women who lived during the first century-and-a-half of Islam, interest in these women has not survived into modern times.

It is no secret that most of the traditions and anecdotes concerning early Islam can be found in collections that were edited no sooner than about 200/815, that is more than a century after the events they describe. There is also considerable controversy concerning the question of the validity of these sources. Some scholars (Watt, Abbot, Shaban, Ahmed and others) claim that the contents of these traditions and anecdotes can be used, albeit with care, as historical sources, while

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[1] The writings in question belong mainly to feminist literature, written in the context of the current debate within Islam on feminism. See, for example, Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Denise Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of ʿĀʾisha Bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: A Historical and Theological Inquiry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; and others. One exception to this generalisation is Ruth Roded's book on women in Islamic biographical collections: *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections, from Ibn Saʿd to Who's Who* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 1994).

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others reject them as unhistorical and prefer instead to use the scant available non-Islamic sources. Yet other scholars have simply stopped doing historical research and instead focus on the study of the Islamic discourse on this topic. The present study adopts the working assumption that traditions and anecdotes are to be treated not as factual reports of actual events, but rather as a narrative whose purpose was to shape a people's historical and cultural memory in accordance with the political aims and cultural conceptions of those who composed them, who may have lived at any period between the time when the reported events supposedly took place and the time when the collection was put together.

These narratives can teach us about the historical period in question in three different ways. First of all, we may assume that the stories were based on a kernel of fact. This enables us, for example, to conclude that a woman mentioned in a story was indeed a real historical figure, with some of the attributes described in the source. Second, since most of the people who composed the anecdotes had some knowledge of the society and the culture which they described, we can, with cautious reservation, learn something from these descriptions about various aspects of the society and culture described in them. Thus, for example, the descriptions that will be discussed below enable us to learn something of women's mobility and the extent of women's involvement in political struggles. Third, the anecdotes reflect their authors' views, which occasionally can enable us to identify the political interests and socio-political discourse of which they form a part, and thereby to reach conclusions concerning the social and political culture and cultural concepts of the period in question.

Muslim women in an era of contradictions

Feminist ideas began to penetrate the Islamic world towards the end of the nineteenth century. These ideas gave rise to a growing debate about the biographies and significance of the first Muslim women at the time of the emergence of Islam. The underlying assumption in the debate was that a new interpretation of women's role in the days of the Prophet would affect the lives of Muslim women in the modern world, and Muslim society as a whole.[2] One topic that was debated was whether the appearance of Islam improved the status of women or the opposite. Opinions on the matter were divided. Some claimed that Muḥammad's teaching repressed women and removed them from the public sphere, while others pointed to various Muslim laws pertaining to women, for example the laws of inheritance and of marriage, as innovations that enhanced the status of women in comparison with pre-Islamic times.[3]

At a quite early stage the topic of the status of women became part of the debate on modernism *versus* tradition in the context of the encounter between Islamic and Western civilisation. The status of women in Islamic society came to symbolise a society's progress and development. In Western eyes the status of women was perceived as a sign of social backwardness in the Third World, thus providing some

[2] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 129.

[3] Jane Smith, "Women, religion, and social change in early Islam", in *Women, Religion, and Social Change in Early Islam*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 19–35.

justification for Western control of far-away continents. Teaching other societies to improve the lot of women was seen as part of "the white man's burden", part of the West's cultural message, and an argument used by colonialists against the societies over which they ruled. The educational effort to improve the status of women created a strong bond between ideas of women's liberation and other Western influences.[4] Qāsim Amīn was one of the intellectuals who believed that the advancement of women was one Western value that was worth emulating; his books *Taḥrīr al-marʾa* (Women's Liberation)[5] and *Al-marʾa l-jadīda* (The New Woman)[6] 1900) exerted considerable influence. The Western-educated Amīn possessed a secular orientation, and argued that the advancement of women could liberate Muslim society from the shackles of its backwardness and help make it the equal of Western societies.[7]

At the same time Islamic reformers, clerics with a religious education, also called for improving the status of women as part of a reform which would, so they thought, revive Muslim society by way of a return to Islam's original values, interpreted according to the spirit of the times. One of the most prominent of these was Muḥammad ʿAbduh, an Egyptian cleric whose influence over the Islamic reformist movement was considerable. He was Qāsim Amīn's teacher. As early as the 1880s ʿAbduh wrote that the need to improve the status of women originates in the values of Islam itself and not in Western civilisation. In this, as in other matters, ʿAbduh drew inspiration from the days of the *salaf* ("ancestors"), i.e., from the days of the Prophet and the first Caliphs, as he envisaged them.[8]

Islam's formative period served as the model both for proponents of women's advancement and for supporters of the traditional way of life. In the course of the twentieth century, Islamic clerics and jurists wrote quite a number of books in which they presented the traditional interpretation of the Qurʾān's view on the status of women.[9] In the last quarter of that century, perhaps as a counterweight to the increasing strength of fundamentalist Islam in various Muslim countries, secular feminist writers also began to show an interest in the ancient texts, for the purpose of reinterpretation. One of the best-known examples is Fatima Mernissi's book.[10] In the 1990s a kind of "Islamic feminism" appeared, led by educated Muslim women; they read the primary sources with the aim of reinterpreting verses that had in the past been understood as disparaging towards women, and highlighting verses and sayings that support equality between the sexes.[11] In both of these cases the authors made an attempt to "play the game" according to the rules of Islam and to compete with Muslim clerics in their own backyard.

[4] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Islam, women, and revolution in twentieth-century Arab thought", in *Women, Religion, and Social Change in Early Islam*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 275–306; Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 152.

[5] Qāsim Amīn, *Taḥrīr al-Marʾa* (Women's Liberation)1899 (Cairo: Dar al-Maʿārif, 1970).

[6] Qāsim Amīn, *Al-marʾa l-jadīda* (The New Woman)1900 (Cairo: Matbaʾat al-maʾarif, 1900).

[7] Qāsim Amīn, "A historical perspective on women", in Qāsim Amīn, *The Liberation of Women and The New Women: A Document in the Early Debate on Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1995) pp. 119–128.

[8] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 139.

[9] Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, pp. 24, 99.

[10] Mernissi, *Women and Islam*.

[11] Margot Badran, "Islamic feminism: what's in a name?" *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 17–23 January 2002, No. 569, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/569/cu1.htm (accessed 7 October 2009).

Both women refer back to what they consider Islam's "golden age", the days of the Prophet, in an attempt to re-examine his sayings on the status of women.

Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya and Muslim biographical tradition

Very few women are mentioned in the Qurʾān itself. However, details about the lives of women who lived during the Prophet's lifetime and later do appear in the biographical lexicons on prominent Muslim personalities written since the Middle Ages. Muslim biography (*sīra*) is a genre that is unique in its scope and its characteristics; the earliest extant remnants of writings of this type date back as far as the third/ninth century. There are those who have explained the great prevalence of biographies as related to the science of *ḥadīth*, which sought as much information as possible about the Prophet's companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and contemporaries. Others have attributed the genre's prevalence to the great importance that early Arab tradition attached to analogy. Biographical lexicons about the lives of prominent people in a certain region or generation have been compiled from early times down to the present day. Some of these compilations also contain the biographies of prominent women in the days of the Prophet as well as his female relatives, especially his first wife Khadīja, his young and beloved wife ʿĀʾisha, his youngest daughter Fāṭima[12] and her servant Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya, whose lives and deeds became models to be emulated by Muslim women. Traditions about the Prophet's utterances transmitted by these women were considered reliable for purposes of Islamic jurisprudence, since they were reported by persons who were constantly at the Prophet's side, and were also present at his deathbed.[13]

The Shīʿite biographical literature has devoted more than usual space to Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya, who was in the service of the Prophet for a long time, and then in the home of Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter. Among Shīʿites she is considered a model of feminine virtue; she is highly respected and every tradition quoted in her name has been accepted as true. As with Fāṭima, Shīʿite writers have attached legendary and supernatural motifs to Fiḍḍa's life, which has given an added dimension to the description of her character in tradition. Modern Shīʿite versions of her story deserve a separate treatment and will not be dealt with in the present article. In the Sunni literature, Fiḍḍa is relegated to the sidelines and does not figure as prominently as other women.

Fiḍḍa's name

Shīʿite[14] sources relate that when the Prophet presented his daughter Fāṭima with a slave girl to help her in her chores at home, he gave her the name Fiḍḍa. We can only guess at the reason why this name (which literally means "silver") was given

[12] Laura Veccia Vaglieri, art. "Fāṭima", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1965), II: 841–850.

[13] Ascha Ghassan, "The 'Mother of the Believers': Stereotypes of the Prophet Muhammad's wives", in *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, ed. Ria Kloppenborg and Woulter J. Hanegraaff (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 89–107, at 90–94.

[14] Whenever the words Shīʿite, Shīʿa and Shīʿism are used in this article, they refer to Imāmi or Twelver Shīʿism.

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to her, perhaps as a good luck wish, or possibly after the name of one of the female mules given to her by Farwa b. ʿUmar.[15] However, the most likely explanation is that the name refers to her skills as a silversmith, as we shall see below. Unfortunately our sources are silent concerning her previous name.

Her second name, al-Nūbiyya (literally "the Nubian") would appear to have been given her either due to the colour of her skin, which may have been similar to that of the inhabitants of the land of Nubia, south of Egypt, or, as is more likely, due to the fact that she was actually brought over to Arabia from relatively nearby Nubia. However, other sources claim that she was the daughter of the king of India,[16] and according to still others she was of Berber origin.[17] Her ethnic origin is thus quite uncertain.

Fiḍḍa's family

After ʿAlī and Fāṭima had inherited Fiḍḍa from the Prophet, they married her to a man by the name of Abū Thaʿlaba al-Ḥabashī,[18] whom she bore a male child. Afterwards Abū Thaʿlaba died and Fiḍḍa remarried, this time to Sulayk.[19] Her son from her first husband died, and after her marriage she refused to have sexual intercourse with her second husband until the legally prescribed time (*ʿidda*)[20] had passed to ensure that she was not pregnant from her deceased first husband. Her second husband complained to the Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (28/644), who ruled in Fiḍḍa's favour.

Eventually she apparently bore Sulayk five children—four sons and one daughter. All that is known about them is that their mother was in the habit of reciting the Qurʾānic verse: "Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world" [21] out of love to and pride in them. They are mentioned as having searched for their mother when she was lost in the desert.[22]

The sons' names were Dāʾūd, Muḥammad, Yaḥyā and Mūsā. Their names are mentioned in relation to an incident involving their mother, who became separated from a caravan with which she was travelling through the desert. She met a man in the desert who asked her if she had sons, and she replied by quoting four

[15] His full name was Farwa b. ʿUmar (or ʿAmr) al-Judhāmī, a Byzantine official who converted to Islam and wrote to the Prophet to inform him of his conversion. In the year 10/632, he sent a member of his tribe named Masʿūd b. Saʿd to the Prophet with a white she-mule named Fiḍḍa, a horse and a donkey named ʿUfayr. See Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* (Qom: Muʾassasat al-ʿAllāma lil-Nashr, 1959) I:168–169, whence Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1983), XVI:107, XXI:375, LXI:195; Khalid Sindawi, "The donkey of the Prophet in Shīʿite tradition", *Al-Masāq*, 18:1 (2006): 87–98, at p. 90, note 35.

[16] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLI:273, no. 29; Ali b. Yunis al-Nabāṭī, *Al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm ila mustaḥiqq al-taqdīm* (Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1964) 2:17.

[17] Al-Mīrzā Ḥasan al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil* (Qom: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 1988), XVI:88, no. 19236-3.

[18] In some sources his name is given as Abū Taghliba. See: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XV:227, no. 7.

[19] Some sources give his name as Abū Mulayk al-Ghaṭafānī. See: Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, II:361; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XV:227, no. 7.

[20] For more on the concept of *ʿidda* in Islam, see: Muḥammad Samāra, *Aḥkām wa āthār al-zawjiyya* (Jerusalem: Printing Workers' Cooperative Press, 1987), pp. 239–253.

[21] Q 18:46.

[22] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, III:343–344; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:86–87, no. 8.

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Qurʾānic verses[23] in which her sons' names occurred. Note that all four sons were named after prophets. These names are quite popular among Muslims, whom a *ḥadīth* urges to call their children by the names of prophets: *tasammaw bi-asmāʾ al-anbiyāʾ* (*rawāhu Aḥmad*) (Give the names of prophets).[24]

As for her daughter, according to our sources her name was Miska, mentioned in connection with the latter's daughter Shahra, a pious woman who worked miracles like her grandmother Fiḍḍa, perhaps an indication that such traits were considered heritable.

Fiḍḍa's physical features

Fiḍḍa's only physical feature mentioned by Shīʿite sources is her dark face,[25] as pointed out above in relation to her name. This feature, as mentioned there, makes it likely that her provenance was indeed the land of Nubia, as testified by her epithet.

Fiḍḍa's death

We know neither the date of Fiḍḍa's death nor her age when she died. However, it is certain that she was still alive at the time of the battle of Karbalāʾ (64/680), in the wake of which she was taken as a prisoner to Damascus, together with Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's wives, sisters and aunts. The sources are silent concerning her fate after that.

However, it would appear that Fiḍḍa chose to remain in Damascus until her death, and that she was buried there. At least according to some sources her tomb[26] was to be found in the "Small Gate"[27] cemetery, near the eastern entrance. These same sources describe it as being located inside a green-domed structure, surrounded by other similar shrines, the whole aggregate popularly called "the prisoners' cemetery", as it was believed that it was populated by a number of women belonging to the Prophet's family who were with Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ.

According to other sources, the structures dedicated to Fiḍḍa and the other women in Damascus are nothing more than commemorative buildings in honour

[23] Q 38:26; 3:144; 19:12; 27:9.

[24] It is well-known that prophets' names are very popular indeed among Shīʿites. See: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmilī (al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī), *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa* (Qom: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 1409/1988), XXI:391, no. 27381; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, XV:129, no. 17752-4. Note also the following statement attributed to the Prophet: "Whosoever has four sons born unto him and does not name one after me has offended me" (al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, XV:13, no. 17754-1; al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, XXI:393, no. 27385).

[25] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:174, no. 15.

[26] See Muḥammad Sādiq al-Kirbāssī, *Al-mawsūʿa l-ḥusayniyya: al-marāqid* (London: Husseini Islamic Centre, 1990), s.v. "al-marāqid", IV:221.

[27] The "Small Gate" in the city wall of Damascus during the Umayyad period was located on the city's south-western extremity. The gate, known today as Bāb al-Shāghūr, is no longer extant. The cemetery, dating from the same time, is located outside the gate whose name it bears. It is one of the largest and best-known in Damascus. For more details see *Maqāmāt wa mashāhid ahl al-bayt ʿalayhim al-salām fī sūriyā* (Shrines of the Prophet's family in Syria), http://www.imamreza.net/arb/imamreza.php?id=2305 (accessed 7 October 2009).

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of these women, who once stayed in that place, while Fiḍḍa was in fact buried in the Baqīʿ al-Gharqad cemetery in Medina.[28]

How the Prophet gave Fiḍḍa to Fāṭima

Shīʿite sources relate the following story concerning the circumstances of Fiḍḍa's coming into the service of Fāṭima. One day, so the story goes, the Prophet visited his daughter. She complained to him that she was worn out by the hard work she did and asked her father for a slave girl to help her in her household chores. The Prophet said in reply: "True, your financial situation is difficult, but know that in the mosque there are four-hundred men with nothing to eat and nothing to wear". He added: "Were I not afraid of harming a single hair of yours I would give you want you want. For I fear that on the Day of Judgment you will be held to account because of the slave girl and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib will deduct you on the Day of Judgment before God if ʿAlī should call in what was his due". Fāṭima, angry at her father's refusal, returned in disappointment to her home, where her husband ʿAlī, seeing the state she was in, asked her what had happened. She told him, whereupon he replied: "You went to your father asking something for this world, and he gave you a garment for your afterlife".

After the Prophet's refusal to accede to his daughter's request the following verse was reportedly revealed to him: "And if you turn away from them and you are awaiting a mercy from your Lord for which you hope, then, speak unto them a soft kind word",[29] telling him that if a relative, in this case his daughter Fāṭima, asked for mercy he should answer kindly. Immediately after the revelation of the verse the Prophet sent his daughter a slave girl to help her in her chores, and named her Fiḍḍa.[30]

Fāṭima works together with Fiḍḍa

After the Prophet gave Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya to his daughter, he enjoined her to share the chores equally with her and to rotate her duties with her every day. This tradition represents the Prophet as treating the slave girl on an equal footing with his own daughter, thus ascribing a principle of equality to him.

Fāṭima, so we are told, honoured her father's request and acted accordingly. We have a report in the name of ʿAbd Allāh b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad quoting Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 656/1258)[31] as saying:

> One night I went out with the Messenger of God to pray. As I approached ʿAlī's house I heard a voice inside saying: "My head aches so much, my belly is empty and my hands are weary from grinding barley". Salmān was

[28] That is the cemetery for the local residents of Medina. For more details, see Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī), *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1979), I:473–474.
[29] Q 17:28.
[30] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, III:341–342; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:85, no. 8.
[31] G. Levi Della Vida, "Salmān al-Fārisī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 2004), Supplement, XII: 701–702.

> disturbed by what he had heard and approached the house. He knocked and Fiḍḍa asked: "Who is at the door?" He answered that it was he, Salmān. Fiḍḍa asked him not to come in yet, because Fāṭima was not properly dressed. She then threw her cloak to Fāṭima, who wrapped herself in it and told Fiḍḍa that she could let Salmān enter. When he came in he saw Fāṭima grinding barley and blood flowing from her palm unto the millstone. Salmān asked her: "Why do you grind barley with bleeding hands while your slave girl stands next to you and does nothing?" Fāṭima answered that she was obeying her father's command to take turns with Fiḍḍa in doing the household chores. She added: "Yesterday was her turn and today it is mine". Salmān then replied: "May God make me your ransom".[32]

Fiḍḍa's love for the family of Fāṭima and ʿAlī

Fiḍḍa is reported as having been very fond indeed of ʿAlī's and Fāṭima's family, including their two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. This affection appears to have been mutual. Fiḍḍa is reported to have empathised deeply with Fāṭima's family on a number of both joyous and sad occasions, and the family entrusted her with their innermost secrets, showing their great trust and deep love for this slave woman, whom they considered as part of the family.

Among the secrets reportedly entrusted to her was the future date of Fāṭima's death, of which ʿAlī informed her. The relevant tradition relates that Fāṭima saw her father in a dream[33] not long after he had died. In the dream the Prophet told her that she would soon follow in his wake. Later she dreamt that angels were taking her to Paradise, where she was shown her father's palace and her own. Upon waking from her sleep, Fāṭima related the dream to ʿAlī and asked him not to tell anyone of her impending death, apart from three women, Umm Salama, Hind bint Suhayl (d. 61/681), Umm Ayman, Baraka bint Thaʿlaba (d. 16/632) and Fiḍḍa, and five men, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (d. 67/687), Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 40/656), al-Miqdād b. ʿAmr (d. 37/653), Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī Jundub b. Junāda (d. 36/652) and Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān (d. 40/656).[34] Here we see that Fāṭima considers Fiḍḍa one of her closest confidantes, on a par even with Umm Salama, the Prophet's wife.

When Fāṭima died, Fiḍḍa was present. She took part in the washing of her body and attended her burial. It is related that when Fāṭima died her husband ʿAlī washed her, and that the only other people who were present were Ḥasan, Ḥusayn,

[32] Quṭb al-Dīn Abū ʿAlī Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī, *Al-kharāʾij wa l-jarāʾiḥ* (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1988), II:530–531; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, LXIII:28, no. 33; Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma* (Qom: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1963), p. 49.

[33] Shīʿite scholars claim that visions of the Prophet in dreams are genuine and constitute a revelation of sorts. They support their claim with the following saying attributed to the Prophet: "Whosoever saw me in a dream has truly seen me, for Satan never takes on my form or that of my regents". Another tradition has the Prophet saying, in a similar vein: "Whosoever visited me in a dream has indeed visited me, for Satan never takes on my form or that of my regents". For more details see: al-Ṣadūq Ali b. al-Husayn b. Babawayh, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā* (Tehran: Dar al-Alam lil-nashr (Jihan), 1958), II:257, no. 11; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, LVIII:234–239, ch. 45, no. 1.

[34] Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, p. 44; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:207, no. 36; XXX:348, no. 164; XLIII:171; LXXVIII:310, no. 31; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, II:186, no. 1761-9.

Zaynab (d. 14/630), Umm Kulthūm (d. 14/630), Fiḍḍa and ʾAsmāʾ bint ʿUmays (d. 45/661).[35] Here ʿAlī is represented as treating Fiḍḍa like an intimate member of the family.

An example of Fiḍḍa's love and concern for Fāṭima's family is the following story of her profound reaction when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn once became lost. In a tradition related in the name of Salmān b. Mahrān al-Aʿmash,[36] the latter reports in his father's name that his grandfather once told them the following story:

> We were sitting with the Messenger of God when Fiḍḍa, Fāṭima's slave girl, entered in tears and said: "Ḥasan and Ḥusayn went out from the house of my mistress Fāṭima and we do not know where they are". She wept and the Prophet immediately rose and went to Fāṭima's house to see for himself. Then the angel Gabriel descended and told him that his two grandchildren were asleep in the shed of the Banū al-Najjār and that God had sent an angel to stand guard over them.[37]

Yet another sign of Fiḍḍa's love for her mistress's family was her participation in carrying out their pledge when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were taken ill. ʿAlī and Fāṭima vowed to fast for three days if their two sons became well again. When they did, Fiḍḍa of her own volition joined the parents in fasting.

Fiḍḍa confirms that ʿAlī is the rightful caliph

Fiḍḍa showed her loyalty to ʿAlī when, following the Prophet's death, she announced that he, ʿAlī, was more fit to be caliph than Abū Bakr. A tradition states that after the Prophet passed away ʿAlī was in the Prophet's house and did what was needed: he consoled the Prophet's wives, made burial arrangements, collated the text of the Qurʾān, and settled the Prophet's debts, amounting to 80,000 dirhams, by selling all that he owned. While ʿAlī was thus occupied, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb came to ʿAlī's house, stood outside and demanded that ʿAlī come out and pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr, threatening that he would kill ʿAlī if he did not come out. Fiḍḍa came to the door and courageously told ʿUmar that ʿAlī was busy and that he deserved to be appointed caliph rather than Abū Bakr. When ʿUmar heard this he was very angry and set fire to the door of the house, intending to burn it down with those in it, Fāṭima, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Fiḍḍa, Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm.[38]

In this story Fiḍḍa is represented as a courageous defender of ʿAlī's right to the caliphate. Her love and respect for the Prophet's family drove her to confront even ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.

[35] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:171; XLIII:180; LXXVIII:310, no. 31; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, II:186, no 1761-9; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, p. 46.

[36] His full name was Sulaymān b. Mahrān Abū Muḥammad al-Aʿmash al-Asadī al-Kūfī. For details, see Taqī l-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1963), p. 177, no. 718; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1415/1995), 215, no. 2834-72; Etan Kohlberg, "Aʿmash", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), I: 926–928.

[37] Al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb* (Qom: Dār al-Harīf al-Raḍī lil-Nashr, 1412/1991), II:428–429.

[38] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXX:293; LIII:18.

Fiḍḍa and the Qurʾān

Fiḍḍa was affected by the religious atmosphere that reigned in the house of her first master, the Prophet, and then in the home of his daughter Fāṭima. She is reported to have known the Qurʾān by heart and to have understood it fully. After she had memorised it, the Qurʾān became a living reality for her, so much so that she would speak in its language and quote it whenever she was asked any question.

Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 456/1072)[39] reports the following conversation between a man who had left the caravan with which he was travelling through the desert and Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya. When he asked her who she was, she replied: "And say: *Salām* (peace)! But they will come to know".[40] So he greeted her and asked her what she was doing there. She answered: "Whomsoever Allāh guides, for him there will be no misleaders",[41] whereupon he asked her if she was human or a jinni, to which she replied: "O Children of Adam! Take your adornment".[42] He then asked her where she was from and she answered: "They are those who are called from a place far away".[43] When he asked her what place she meant she said: "*Ḥajj* to the House is a duty that mankind owes to Allāh".[44] He then asked her when she was separated from her train and she answered: "And indeed We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six Days".[45] Whereupon he asked her if she wanted something to eat, to which she replied: "And We did not create them bodies that ate not food".[46] He fed her and then said: "Hurry but don't rush". She answered: "Allāh burdens not a person beyond his scope".[47] He offered to let her ride behind him on his mount. She refused, saying: "Had there been therein gods besides Allāh, then verily both would have been ruined".[48] So he climbed down and let her ride, and she commented: "Glory to Him who has subjected this to us".[49] The man then continued his story and related that, when they had reached the caravan, he asked her if she had an acquaintance there, to which she replied: "O Dāwūd! Verily! We have placed you as a successor on earth,[50] Muḥammad is no more than a messenger,[51] O Yaḥyā! Hold fast the Scripture,[52] O Mūsā! Verily! It is I, Allāh".[53] Upon hearing these verses the man called out the four names just mentioned and immediately four young men approached her. He asked her who they were and she replied: "Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world".[54]

[39] His full name is ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ṭalḥa al-Naysabūrī al-Qushayrī. He was born in Naysabūr and died there. He composed many books, of which the most famous is *Laṭāʾif al-ishāra;* for details, see Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-aʿlām.* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyīn, 1986), IV:57.
[40] Q 43:89.
[41] Q 39:37.
[42] Q 7:31.
[43] Q 41:44.
[44] Q 3:97.
[45] Q 50:38.
[46] Q 21:8.
[47] Q 2:286.
[48] Q 21:22.
[49] Q 43:13.
[50] Q 38:26.
[51] Q 3:144.
[52] Q 19:12.
[53] Q 27:9.
[54] Q 18:46.

When the four young men had reached her, Fiḍḍa said: "O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy".[55] Then the man said: "give me some compensation" and Fiḍḍa answered: "Allāh gives manifold increase to whom He pleases".[56] So her sons increased the amount of his recompense. When he asked them about the woman they answered: "This is our mother Fiḍḍa, the slave of Fāṭima, who for the last twenty years has spoken only in (the words of) the Qurʾān".[57]

This tradition ascribes to Fiḍḍa not only an excellent memory, which enabled her to learn the entire Qurʾān by heart, but also the wits to utilize the appropriate verse at the right time.

Qurʾānic verses that Shīʿite exegesis associates with Fiḍḍa

According to Shīʿite sources, Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya had the rare honour of having been the instigator, together with ʿAlī and Fāṭima, of the revelation of three Qurʾānic verses. The three verses in question are all from Sūra 76 (verses 1, 7 and 8).

Q 76:1 ("Has there not been over man a period of time, when he was nothing to be mentioned?"): According to Shīʿite sources this verse was revealed when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were ill. They were visited by their grandfather the Prophet, and many others. Fāṭima and Fiḍḍa made a vow to fast for three days if the two children became well again,[58] and indeed fulfilled their vow when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn recovered. On this occasion, so claim the Shīʿite sources, this verse, whose message is that every person at some time has to go through a difficult period, was revealed.

Q 76:7 ("They fulfil vows, and they fear a Day whose evil will be wide-spreading"). According to Shīʿite sources[59] this verse refers to the vow just referred to, which

[55] Q 28:26.
[56] Q 2:261.
[57] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, III:343–344; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:86–87, no. 8.
[58] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, III:373–374; ʿAlī b. Yūsuf b. Muṭṭahar al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-yaqīn fī faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn* (Tehran: Ministry of Culture Press, 1995), pp. 92–93; Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Abī l-Fatḥ al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī maʿrifat al-aʾimma*. With a commentary by Sayyid Hāshim al-Rasūlī (Tabrīz: Maktabat Banī Hāshimī, 1961), I:303; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXV:245, no. 6; ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl li-qawāʿid al-tafḍīl*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī (Tehran: Ministry of Culture Press, 1411/1990), II:394, no. 1042; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Ṭāwūs, *Saʿd al-suʿūd* (Qom: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir, 1369/1949), pp. 141–142; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn wa baṣīrat al-mutaʿiẓīn* (Qom: Dār al-Riḍā lil-Nashr, 1966), I:161; Ibn Furāt Abū l-Qāsim Furāt b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī* (Tehran: Ministry of Culture Press, 1989), p. 520, no. 519–676; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXV:249, no. 7; Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Ḥusaynī al-Astarʾābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira fī faḍl al-ʿitra l-ṭāhira* (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1988), pp. 724–725; al-Ṣadūq Muhammad b. ʿAli b. Babawayh, *Al-Āmālī lil-ṣaddūq* (Tehran: almaktaba alʾislamiyya, 1984), 257, no. 11; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1947), p. 528; Yaḥyā b. Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn al-Asadī l-Ḥillī Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *ʿUmdat ʿuyūn ṣiḥāḥ al-akhbār fī manāqib imam al-abrār* (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1986), p. 346; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-ṭarāʾif fī maʿrifat madhāhib al-ṭawāʾif* (Qom: Maṭbaʿat al-Khayyām, 1400/1979), I:109–110, no. 161; al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid*, II:398, no. 1047; al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, II:222–223.
[59] Al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, XXIII:304–305, no. 29617–29-618; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, II:152–153, no. 1676-25; al-Ṣadūq, *Al-amālī lil-ṣaddūq*, pp. 257–260, no. 11; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXV:237–240, no. 1; al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma*, I:302–303; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXV:245–247, no. 6; Aḥmad b. Mūsā b. Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī, *Bināʾ al-maqāla l-fāṭimiyya fī naqd al-risāla l-ʿuthmāniyya*, ed ʿAlī al-ʿAdnānī al-Gharīfī (Qom: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyā l-Turāth, 1411/1990),

ʿAlī, Fāṭima and Fiḍḍa made when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn became ill. After they made this vow, so claim the sources, God revealed this verse to impress all three with the dire consequences they would have to face on the Day of Judgment if they did not fulfil their vow. We see here once again that, according to the Shīʿite view, Fiḍḍa was a full-fledged participant in the life of the family, in good times and bad.

Q 76:8 ("And they give food, in spite of their love for it, to the poor, the orphan, and the captive"). According to Shīʿite sources, this verse was revealed in honour of ʿAlī, Fāṭima and Fiḍḍa, who gave food to the needy even when they were desperately in need themselves. The story is as follows: After their three-day fast in fulfilment of their vow, ʿAlī went to Shamʿūn b. Ḥārayyā[60] al-Khaybarī, a Jew, and borrowed three measures of barley. Fāṭima took one measure from which she made five loaves of bread, one for each member of the household. As they prepared to eat their meal, a poor man came to them. They gave him all their food and went to bed hungry. The next day Fāṭima ground the second measure and baked bread. When she set the table they were visited by an orphan. They gave him all their food and tasted none themselves. For the second consecutive day they went to bed hungry. On the third day Fāṭima made bread out of the third measure, but before they could eat a prisoner came to them and asked for food. They gave him all their food and remained hungry for the third day running.[61] It was in the wake of this incident that, according to Shīʿite tradition, the verse was revealed.

Fiḍḍa the miracle-worker

The term *karāma* refers, according to Muslim theologians, to a miracle performed by a saint[62] or holy man who does not claim to be a prophet, in contradistinction to *muʿjiza*, which is an act in defiance of natural law, performed by someone who claims to be a prophet in order to discredit those who dispute his claim and make them incapable of performing a similar act; or an event in violation of natural law, whose purpose is to attain goodness and happiness, in addition to a claim to prophethood and proof of the veracity of someone claiming to be an apostle of God.[63]

According to this concise definition *muʿjiza* and *karāma* are easily distinguished: *muʿjiza* is a miracle performed by a prophet, whereas *karāma* is revealed through

(*footnote continued*)
pp. 235–238; al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, pp. 519–524, no. 519–676; al-Fattāl, *Rawdat al-wāʿizīn*, I:160–163; al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, II:398–399, no. 1047; Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *ʿUmda*, pp. 346–348, no. 668.

[60] Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *ʿUmda*, p. 347; al-Ṭūsī, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl*, p. 528; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, III:374. According to another tradition, his name was Shamʿūn b. Ḥānā (see Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Ṭarāʾif*, I:107, no. 160; al-Ḥillī, *Binā' al-maqāla al-fāṭimiyya*, p. 235). Still another tradition calls him Shamʿūn b. Ḥārā (see al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, p. 521, no. 519–676). A fourth version reads Shamʿūn b. Ḥābā (see al-Ḥilliī, *Kashf al-yaqīn*, p. 93).

[61] Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *ʿUmda*, pp. 345–347; al-Ḥilliī, *Kashf al-yaqīn*, pp. 92–96; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, XV:153–154, no. 17836-4; al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī lil-ṣaddūq*, 260–261; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXV:237–240, no. 1; XXXV:252–255, no. 8–15; al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, I:136; al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, pp. 520–524, no. 519–676; pp. 528–529, nos. 528–679, 528–680.

[62] The original text reads "saint"; quite likely a translation of the Arabic term *walī*, which will be explained below.

[63] Edward Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1874), s.v. '.j.z.

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a *walī*.[64] This definition appears mainly in Sunnī sources. Shīʿites also use the word *muʿjiza* to refer to a prophetic miracle,[65] but also include in the concept miracles performed by an *imām*.[66] In order to gain a better understanding of these concepts, we shall first examine the Sunnī definition of *muʿjiza* and then analyse the Shīʿite position.

According to the Sunnī view on the distinctive characteristics of *muʿjiza* and *karāma*, the two have one feature in common, namely the violation of natural law (*kharq al-ʿāda*).[67] This condition is so basic that the expression *kharq al-ʿāda* can by itself serve to refer to a miracle, whether of the *muʿjiza* or the *karāma* type.[68] According to al-Bāqillani,[69] the *ʿāda* ("normal") refers to a repetition, whether in the form of renewal or of continued existence.[70] In the case of *kharq al-ʿāda* this habitual course is violated. The act in question must also violate the laws that apply to the specific type of creature involved. Thus, if a man carries out an action that angels perform as a matter of course but human beings do not, this, too, will be considered *kharq al-ʿāda*.[71] This kind of miracle can only occur among creatures, since it is only the natural laws governing their behaviour which can be violated.[72] According to all the definitions of *muʿjiza* and *karāma*, both involve *kharq al-ʿāda*.[73]

A *muʿjiza* must also possess a number of additional qualities, besides being a case of *kharq al-ʿāda*: It must be an act that is beyond the power of humans;[74] it must be inimitable;[75] and it must occur precisely in the manner in which the person performing it claims it will occur,[76] if it is to be considered proof of his claims.[77]

[64] *Walī* means a "friend of God", who obeys Him and whom He loves; see Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *w.l.y.* According to al-Rāzī, the literal meaning of *walī* is "intimate", i.e., one who is close to God thanks to his devotion, and whom God in return shows grace and mercy; see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-tafsīr al-kabīr aw mafātīh al-ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya,1411/1990).

[65] I.e., revealed through a prophet.

[66] I.e., revealed through an *imām*. Miracles performed by an *imām* and recognised by Sunnis are considered by the latter to be *karāma*; see Richard Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes. Theologien und Erscheinungsformen des islamischen Heiligenwunders*. Freiburger Islamstudien XI (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1987), p. 39.

[67] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 16.

[68] Al-Rāzī, *Al-tafsīr al-kabīr*, XXI:175–176. Here the expression *kharq al-ʿāda* appears in reference to an act that al-Rāzī later characterises as a *karāma*.

[69] A theologian and Islamic jurist (d. 403/1013) who made a significant contribution to the development of the Ashʿarī school of jurisprudence. He is reported to have written 56 books, six of which are extant. Among his books is *Kitāb al-bayān ʿan al-farq bayna l-muʿjizāt wa l-karamāt wa l-hiyal wa l-kahāna wa l-sirr wa l-nārinjāt*, which deals with miracles whose purpose is to validate claims to prophethood. See R.J. McCarthy, "Al-Bāḳillānī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1965), I:958–959.

[70] Al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-bayān*, quoted in Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, pp. 16–17.

[71] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, pp. 17–18.

[72] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 17.

[73] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 25; al-Rāzī, *al-Barahim dari ilmi al-Kalam*, quoted in Gramlich, p. 101; ʿAlī b. Yūsuf b. Muṭṭahar al-Ḥillī, *Anwār al-malakūt fī sharḥ al-Yāqūt* (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Dānishgāh, 1959), p. 184; *Karāma*, p. 615.

[74] According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, for example; see Martin McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1978), p. 85.

[75] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 27.

[76] McDermot, *Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*, p. 85. The meaning of this condition is that a person about to perform a miracle must describe what he is about to do. Thus, for example, if he says that he will revive the dead and then proceeds to perform another kind of miracle, it does not constitute proof of his claims (Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, p. 33).

[77] For example, if a person causes a lizard to speak, and that lizard then says that the performer of the miracle is a liar, the act cannot be considered a *muʿjiza* (Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 35).

But the most important single feature a *muʿjiza* must possess is a connection to prophecy; it is a miracle performed by a prophet, and is always accompanied by a claim or demand for recognition of the performer as a prophet.[78] The purpose of a *muʿjiza* is to validate a person's claim to prophethood, and can therefore be performed only by a prophet. A *karāma*, on the other hand, does not accompany any such claim. The presence or absence of the claim to prophethood is thus the main, and sometimes the only, difference between *karāma* and *muʿjiza*.[79] Therefore, if someone performs an act involving a violation of the laws of nature (*kharq al-ʿāda*) without at the same time also making a claim of prophethood (even if making a different claim, of *wilāya*, the state of being a *walī*, for example), that act will be considered a *muʿjiza* and not a *karāma*.[80] According to this view, a *muʿjiza* constitutes a necessary condition for proving someone to be a prophet, but no *karāma* is needed for considering someone to be a *walī*.[81]

There are also some other differences between a *muʿjiza* and a *karāma*. The former, since it constitutes proof of true prophethood, must be seen by others, whereas the *karāma* is performed in secret,[82] since it only serves to strengthen the person by means of whom it is made manifest.[83] The public nature of a *muʿjiza* is also required so that the prophet can challenge his opponents (*taḥaddin*, also one of the characteristics of a *muʿjiza*). This distinction, between the public nature of a *muʿjiza* and the private nature of a *karāma*, is commonly found in Ṣūfī writings.[84]

Yet another difference between the two kinds of miracle concerns the performer's intentions and wishes. A *muʿjiza* takes place because its performer wishes to prove the truth of his claim, whereas a *karāma* may be unexpected, and take place without any volitional control by the person who performs it.[85] In the Ṣūfī view, a *karāma* may constitute an obstacle on the path to unification with God. For that reason it is considered undesirable, and to be viewed with suspicion.[86]

In Islam a miracle is a supernatural deed performed by a pious person. A miracle worker is expected to hide the miracle from the public.[87]

In the Shīʿite view, not every miracle must necessarily be performed by an *imām*. However, no miracle can be performed without an *imām*'s intercession or assistance.[88]

Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya is credited with two miracles, and another miracle is ascribed to her granddaughter Shahra. Both are thus considered saints. All three were

[78] According to al-Rāzī, an act involving *kharq al-ʿāda* may also be performed by a person with claims other than prophethood (a claim of divinity, for example), as well as by tricksters and magicians; however, only an act performed by a true prophet is called *muʿjiza* (see al-Rāzī, *Al-tafsīr al-kabīr*, quoted in Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, pp. 19–20.

[79] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 41.

[80] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 20.

[81] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* pp. 52–53.

[82] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 43.

[83] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 49.

[84] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 43. On the concept of *taḥaddin* see also Peter Antes, *Prophetenwunder in der Aš'ariya bis al-Ghazālī* (Freiburg: Br. Walter, 1970), pp. 7–36; Al-Ḥillī, *Anwār al-malakūt*, p. 184.

[85] Gremlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 52.

[86] Louis Gardet, "*Karāma*", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1965; second edition), IV:616.

[87] Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes,* p. 43.

[88] Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Badrān, *Adabiyyāt al-karāma l-ṣūfiyya* (United Arab Emirates: Markaz Ziyād lil-Turāth wa l-Taʾrīkh, 2001), p. 57.

performed in the context of a problem, which they resolved. The author of the text in which the miracle is related raises in the reader an expectation that a supernatural event will provide a satisfactory solution to an apparently impossible situation. The miracle then provides the reader with a satisfactory ending.

The first miracle

This miracle was performed after Fiḍḍa had moved into Fāṭima's household. One day she and Fāṭima wanted to bake some bread. Fāṭima prepared the dough and sent Fiḍḍa out to get some firewood. Fiḍḍa collected a large quantity of wood, too heavy for her to carry. She then pronounced the following incantation, which the Prophet had taught her: "Oh One! There is none like the One. You can make anyone die and destroy anyone. You are on your throne, One, who never sleeps". Immediately after she finished saying this, an Arabian from the tribe of Azd Shinūʾa appeared and carried the parcel of wood to Fāṭima's house.[89]

This miracle was born of dire necessity. The fact that her invocation was immediately answered shows that the story's author must have held Fiḍḍa in very high regard, and considered her a saint.

The second miracle

This miracle happened to Fiḍḍa at Karbalāʾ, after the death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (64/680), on the eleventh night of the month of Muḥarram in the year 61/680. Fiḍḍa was one of the women of the Prophet's family[90] who had accompanied Ḥusayn on his journey from Ḥijāz to Kūfa, where he was to be proclaimed caliph. The Umayyad authorities, however, followed his movements and sent a large army to confront him before he arrived in Kūfa. The two sides met at Karbalāʾ. In the battle Ḥusayn lost his life. His head was brought to the Umayyad caliph Yazīd (d. 67/683), while the rest of his body remained out in the open for a number of days before being buried.

According to Shīʿite sources, the commander of the Umayyad forces, ʿUmar b. Saʿd, ordered Ḥusayn's body to be trampled by horses, and picked out ten men to do the deed.[91] When Fiḍḍa learned of this she immediately turned to ʿAlī's daughter Zaynab (d. 66/682) and informed her that she knew an incantation taught to her by the Prophet that would make a lion appear out of the nearby forest to

[89] Ibn Ḥajar Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajjāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), VIII:75–76; whence Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Aʿlamī l-Ḥāʾirī, *Tarājim aʿlām al-nisāʾ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1987), II:365–366.

[90] A total of 15 women were with Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ, including his sisters and aunts. They were: six daughters of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (Zaynab, Umm Kulthūm, Fāṭima, Ṣafiyya, Raqqiyya, Umm Hāniʾ), two of Ḥusayn's daughters (Fāṭima and Sakīna), and the following: Rabāb, ʿĀtika, Umm Muḥsin b. al-Ḥasan, the daughter of Muslim b. ʿUqayl, Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya, Ḥusayn's slave girl, and Umm Wahb b. ʿAbd Allāh.

[91] The ten were: Isḥāq b. Ḥaywa (according to some sources the father's name was Ḥawba, Ḥuwayya or Ḥanwa), Akhnas b. Marthad b. ʿAlqama al-Ḥadramī, Ḥalīm b. al-Ṭufayl (or al-Sabīʿī), ʿUmar b. Ṣabīḥ al-Ṣīdāwī, Rajāʾ b. al-Munqidh b. Murra al-ʿAbdī, Sālim b. Khuthayma (or Khuyathma) al-Juʿfī, Ṣāliḥ b. Wahab al-Juʿfī, Wāḥiẓ b. Nāʿim (or Ghānim), Hānī b. Shabath (or Tabīth) al-Ḥadramī, and Asyad b. Mālik. For more details, see ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar b. Ṭāwūs Ibn Namā, *Al-malhūf ʿalā qatlā l-ṭufūf*, ed. Fāris Tabrīziyān "al-Ḥassūn" (Qom: Dār al-Uswa lil-Ṭibāʿa wa l-Nashr, 1414/1993), p. 182; Hāshim al-Nājī al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī, *Ǧazāʾ aʿdāʾ qatalat sayyid al-shuhadāʾ fī dār al-dunyā* (Qom: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), 9–453.

protect Ḥusayn's body from the Umayyad soldiers, similar to the miracle performed by Safīna, the Prophet's slave.[92] Zaynab immediately agreed to Fiḍḍa's proposal. Fiḍḍa went into the nearby forest and found a lion lying on the path. She addressed it as "Abū Ḥārith" and said: "Do you know what they want to do with Ḥusayn's body?" She told the lion, who then came with her to guard the body. The lion spread Ḥusayn's blood on his paws and head and burst into tears. When the Umayyad horses came, they were frightened away by the lion, whereupon ʿUmar b. Saʿd (d. 64/680) told his army that temptation was being put in their path and they should not give in to it. The Umayyad army then left, without molesting Ḥusayn's body.[93]

The lion's subservience to Fiḍḍa as well as the fact that he knew when he was being called and understood what was said to him, are all features which are meant to emphasize Fiḍḍa's saintly qualities.

Here, again, a miracle takes place in a situation of urgency, whose seriousness is carefully built up in the text, and whose resolution reinforces Fiḍḍa's status.

Shahra, Fiḍḍa's granddaughter, as a miracle worker

Shīʿite sources refer to Shahra, Fiḍḍa's granddaughter by her daughter Miska, as a worker of miracles like her grandmother. It would appear that, in the Shīʿite view, Fiḍḍa bequeathed her powers to her descendant. The power to perform miracles is considered come from God, and Fiḍḍa was apparently blessed with it because

[92] His true name was Mahrān, and his epithet Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. The Prophet gave him the name Safīna (literally "ship") because he was able to carry heavy loads, like a ship or, according to others, because he traveled as much as a camel (a ship of the desert). He was of Persian origin and was the Prophet's slave, whom Umm Salama (Hind bint Suhayl, d. 681), the Prophet's wife, purchased and emancipated, on condition that he remain in the service of the Prophet (for details see: Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Al-maqāmāt al-ʿāliyya fī l-karāmāt al-jāliyya li-baʿḍ al-ṣaḥāba riḍwān Allāh ʿalayhim*, ed. ʿAffat Wāṣil Ḥamza (no publisher, 1986), p. 86; Yūsuf b. Ismāʿīl al-Nabahānī, *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Ibrāhīm ʿAṭwa ʿAwaḍ (Beirut: al-maktaba al-thaqafiyya, 1992), I:143). It is related of him that he was once at sea when suddenly his boat cracked and he was forced to anchor off a beach near a thick forest. When a lion appeared before him Safīna said to it: "Oh Abū l-Ḥārith (an epithet for lion), I am Safīna, servant of the Messenger of God, the Prophet Muḥammad". When the lion heard this, it inclined its head and drew Safīna, who was on one of the planks of the broken boat, to safety. When they landed on the beach, the lion gave a farewell roar and left (for more details, see al-Nabahānī, *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*, I:143). This tradition tells us that the lion recognized Safīna as the Prophet's servant and inclined his head out of respect for him. Safīna, too, did not fear the lion, thanks to his ties with the Prophet. In this respect, we see a similarity between this story and the tale about Fiḍḍa, whose close association with the Prophet and his family perhaps gave rise to a similar account.

[93] Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-kāfī* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1946), I:465–466, no. 8; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XL:159–170, no. 17. To this day, the spot where Fiḍḍa is said to have called the lion, in an alley off ʿAbbās St. in Karbalāʾ, is called "the place of the lion and Fiḍḍa" (*maqām asad wa-Fiḍḍa*). In addition, there is a side-street (*ʿiqd* in the local dialect) named "Fiḍḍa of the Lion Road" (*ṭarīq Fiḍḍat al-asad*). There is a tradition that pilgrims to Ḥusayn's shrine would, if accosted by a lion, recite Fiḍḍa's incantation, which was effective in keeping the lion at a distance (here I wish to thank Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kirbāssī, who provided me with this information in a telephone conversation from his place of residence in London on 31 August 2006). In the annual Shīʿite re-enactment of the events of ʿĀshūrāʾ, one person dresses up in a lion's skin to represent Fiḍḍa's lion (for more details see: Jawād Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿāshūrāʾ*, trans. Khalīl Zāmil al-ʿIṣāmī (Beirut Dār al-Rasūl al-Akram: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍāʾ, 1997), p. 40; Mirzā Muḥammad-Taqī Lisān al-Mulk Sipihr, *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh: Dawra-yi kamil-i tarikh-i Qajariya*, ed. Jahangir Qāʾim-Maqāmī (Tehran: Amir-Kabir, 1344/1965), IV:23).

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of her dutiful service to Fāṭima and her family. It is likely that the Shīʿi attribution of miracle-working powers to Fiḍḍa and her granddaughter has as its purpose the promotion of love for Fāṭima and her descendants among the believers.

The following tradition tells the story of a miracle performed by Shahra. It is related by Mālik b. Dīnār, who states that he was among a group of people who wanted to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. As they gathered to say their farewells before leaving, he saw a weak woman on a thin mount, whom some people were trying to persuade to change her mind, but she insisted on going. On the way, her mount became exhausted and would not walk any further. The woman then raised her head and called out to her God: "You did not leave me at home, nor did You carry me to Yours. I swear by Your glory and majesty that if anyone else had treated me this way I would have complained to no one but You". The moment her words were said a man appeared out of the desert, leading a she-camel. He told the woman to ride the camel, which then walked with the speed of lightning. Mālik b. Dīnār adds: "When I arrived at the place where one circles [the Kaʿba] I saw that woman circling. I asked her who she was and she replied: 'I am Shahra daughter of Miska daughter of Fiḍḍa, Fāṭima's servant girl'".[94]

This tradition is based on the report of a single transmitter, Mālik b. Dīnār. The miracle here has the function of saving the woman from the dire straits in which she found herself. The nature of the miracle is a mixture of the realistic and the fantastic. The she-camel looks like any other, but its speed is fabulous.

Fiḍḍa the alchemist

Fiḍḍa reportedly possessed some expertise in alchemy, especially in the field of the transmutation of metals. Stories of her alchemical activities relate to two different periods in her life, first in her native land before she came into the service of the Prophet's household, and later when she was with Fāṭima. In *Biḥār al-anwār*[95] it is related that when Fiḍḍa arrived at Fāṭima's house she brought with her some elixir.[96] She took a piece of copper, softened it, wrought it into the shape of an ingot and poured the elixir on it. The ingot changed colour and now looked like gold. When ʿAlī came, Fiḍḍa put the ingot before him. ʿAlī said to her: "You did well, Fiḍḍa, but if you had melted the copper the colour would have been better and fetched a higher price". Fiḍḍa, surprised by ʿAlī's perspicuity, asked him if he was familiar with the secrets of alchemy. He answered that he was, and that he had passed on his knowledge to his son Ḥusayn. He added: "We [i.e. the imāms from the Prophet's family] know even greater secrets". He then pointed and there appeared before them a buried treasure. He asked Fiḍḍa to place her ingot with the treasure. She did so and the treasure disappeared once more.

[94] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, III:338; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:46, no. 46.
[95] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLI:273–274, no. 29.
[96] Elixir was a potion which was believed to be able to turn base metal (iron, copper and so on) into gold. Arab alchemists made great efforts to obtain it. In Arabic it is known under several different names: *ḥajar al-falāsifa* ("philosophers' stone"), *al-rūḥ*, *al-khamīra*. According to the well-known Arab alchemist Jābir b. Hayyān elixir can be produced by boiling gold in various liquids 1,000 times consecutively. For details see: ʿUmar Farūkh, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿulūm ʿind al-ʿarab* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyīn, 1977), p. 243; M. Ullmann, "al-Iksīr", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1986; second edition), III:1087–1088.

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This story reflects the Shīʿite view that ʿAlī, and in fact all *imāms*, know not just alchemy, but all there is to know, and that nothing can be kept secret from them.

Fiḍḍa and *ḥadīth*

Fiḍḍa, who was a member of Fāṭima's household, is held to be a transmitter of many traditions passed on to her by her mistress. However, it is quite difficult to determine which of these traditions were in fact transmitted by her, and which were ascribed to her by later writers.

In addition to traditions in Fāṭima's name, Fiḍḍa also appears as the transmitter of traditions from ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.[97] Waraqa b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Azdī,[98] Salmān al-Fārisī[99] and ʿAbd Allāh b. Idrīs al-Awdī are reported to have transmitted traditions in Fiḍḍa's name.[100]

Among the matters on which Fiḍḍa is reported to have transmitted traditions are Fāṭima's grief at the death of her father the Prophet[101] and the elegies she composed on that occasion,[102] as well as Fiḍḍa's own grief at her mistress's death.

Fiḍḍa al-Nūbiyya in modern scholarship

The Lebanese Shīʿite writer Zaynab Fawwāz[103] was apparently the first person in modern times who evoked the name of Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya in her *al-Durr al-manthūr fī ṭabaqāt rabbāt al-khudūr*,[104] in which she provided a short 20-line biography (pp. 439–440), where she delineated Fiḍḍa's character and mentioned her three-day fast in fulfillment of the vow she and her masters made when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were ill.

The contemporary Kuwaiti writer Maḥmūd al-Gharīfī has recently published a small 61-page book in which he tells the story of Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya for children.[105] It is part of a series on Islamic sites and personalities. Naturally in a book of this kind one expects neither unalloyed objectivity nor a list of sources.

[97] A l-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, II:137, no. 1629-3; II:203, no. 1799-14; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXIX:174; XLIII:174, no. 15.

[98] His name does not appear in any biographical collection of which we are aware.

[99] Al-Rāwandī, *Al-kharāʾij wa l-jarāʾiḥ*, II:530; whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:28, no. 33.

[100] Al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī*, p. 233, no. 3148-57.

[101] See for example: al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XLIII:174–180, no. 15.

[102] See for example Khālid Sindāwī, *Fāṭima al-zahrāʾ shāʿira* (Kafr Qariʿ: Dār al-Hudā lil-Ṭibāʿa wa l-Nashr Karīm, 2001) pp. 32–41, 55ff.

[103] She was born in the town of Tibnīn in 1860 in the Jabal ʿĀmil region (today in southern Lebanon), and died in Egypt in 1914. A well-known writer and historian, she was called *Durrat al-mashriq* ("Pearl of the Orient"). She went to school in Alexandria and studied under the poet Ḥasan Ḥusnī al-Ṭawīrānī (d.1897), the owner of the newspaper *Al-Nīl*. She published a number of books. For more details see: Muḥammad Kāẓim Makkī, *Al-ḥaraka l-fikriyya wa l-adabiyya fī Jabal ʿĀmil* (Intellectual and Literary Activity in Jabal ʿĀmil) (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1963), pp. 183–193; Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa* (Shīʿite Notables) (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1986), VII:134–135; al-Ziriklī, *Al-aʿlām*, III:67.

[104] Cairo: Būlāq, 1894. A large-format, 562-page biographical dictionary with entries for 456 prominent women from both East and West.

[105] Maḥmūd al-Gharīfī, *Yā Fiḍḍa sandīnī . . . shahāda lā turadd* (Kuwait: Idārat Thamin al-Hujaj, 2005).

Recently the Iraqi poet ʿĀdil al-Kāẓimī has put on the internet a 22-line poem entitled *ʾIlā sayyidatī Fiḍḍa*,[106] in which he lists her virtues and those of the Prophet's family.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have made the acquaintance of Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya, a dark-skinned slave girl, probably of Nubian origin, who was owned by the Prophet and then given to his daughter Fāṭima to help her in her household chores.

Fiḍḍa was married to Abū Thaʿlaba l-Ḥabashī, to whom she bore four sons and one daughter, named after prophets.

Fiḍḍa was intelligent and forthright. She is reported as having known the Qurʾān by heart and used Qurʾānic verses in her conversation.

Among the qualities attributed to her by Shīʿite sources are a knowledge of alchemy and miracle-working powers. She is also quoted as a transmitter of traditions in the name of Fāṭima, ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.

Is there a purpose behind the various tales told about this woman? It would appear that Shīʿite sources want to stress the fact that anyone who is loyal to the Prophet's family, be it even a lowly, black slave girl, is as one of the family, beloved by them and by God. In other words, Shīʿism wishes in this way to stress the equality of all its believers, whatever their ethnic origin or social status.

[106] For details, see www.alhaidaria.com/showthread.php?p=7250

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MĪTHAM B. YAḤYĀ AL-TAMMĀR: AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN EARLY SHĪ'ISM

MĪṬAM B. YAḤYÀ AL-TAMMĀR: UNA FIGURA IMPORTANTE EN EL ŠĪ'ISMO TEMPRANO

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The present study provides an analysis of an important Shī'ite personality, Mītham b. Yaḥyā al-Tammār, a close follower and confidant of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who played a significant role in the early history of Shī'ism but has been quite ignored by modern scholarship. We hope to redress the matter here, and provide insight into his biography, his relations with 'Alī, and how these relations enriched early Shī'ite thought and religious jurisprudence. In the following pages we shall discuss Mītham's origins, his personality, his descendants and the role they played in Shī'ite jurisprudence, his commentary on the Qur'ān and his other writings, his role as transmitter of traditions, his students, his mystical knowledge, and the events surrounding his death.

Key words: Shī'a; Early Shī'ism; Religious Jurisprudence; Commentary on the Qur'ān; transmission of *ḥadīth;* Mītham b. Yaḥyā al-Tammār; 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

Este artículo ofrece un análisis sobre un personaje importante en el ámbito šī'í, Mīṭam b. Yaḥyà al-Tammār, un seguidor cercano y de confianza de 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, que desempeñó un papel considerable durante los primeros tiempos del šī'ismo, pero que, sin embargo, ha sido completamente olvidado por los estudios modernos. El propósito de este trabajo es "recuperar" el personaje y proporcionar un nuevo punto de vista de su biografía y su relación con 'Alī analizando cómo esa relación enriquece el pensamieto šī'í y la jurisprudencia religiosa de los inicios en ese ámbito. Para ello, se analizarán los orígenes de Mīṭam, su personalidad, sus discípulos y el papel que éstos desempeñaron en la jurisprudencia šī'í. Estudiaremos también sus comentarios sobre el Corán y otros escritos, el papel que desempeñó como transmisor de tradiciones, su conocimiento sobre la mística y los principales acontecimientos en torno a su muerte.

Palabras clave: Šī'a; Šī'ismo temprano; jurisprudencia religiosa; comentarios sobre el Corán; transmisión de hadices; Mīṭam b. Yaḥyà al-Tammār; 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

1. **A short biography**

The origins of Mītham[1] *al-Tammār*

Abū Sālim, Mītham b. Yaḥyā al-Tammār al-Nahrawānī[2] was of Persian origin. We know neither the year of his birth nor when he arrived in Kūfa, although it is probable that he was taken prisoner as a child in Persia after the Battle of Qādisiyya (637 CE) and sold in the slave market of Kūfa to a woman of the Banū Asad tribe. After a certain period of time as her slave he was bought by ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[3] (d. 661 CE), who set him free.

Tradition relates that when ʻAlī asked him for his name he answered "Sālim", whereupon ʻAlī said: "The Messenger of God told me that your name was Mītham." Mītham then answered: "God spoke the truth and so did His Prophet. That is indeed my name." Then ʻAlī told him to return to his original name, by which the Prophet called him. This he did and from then was known as Mītham, surnamed Abū Sālim.[4]

The tradition indicates that he possessed a non-Arab name first and thus, if reliable, provides evidence for his Persian origin.

[1] According to *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* the name written /m/y/th/m/ is to be pronounced with a long ī (i.e. "Mītham") wherever it is found, except in the name "Maytham al-Baḥrānī". For more detail see: al-Khawānsārī Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī b. Zayn al-ʻĀbidīn, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʻulamāʼ wa-l-sādāt,* A.A. Ismāʻīliyān (ed.), Teheran, 1390-1392/1970-1972, 752-754.

[2] It is not clear how Mītham came to possess the attribute "al-Nahrawānī". He may perhaps have been born in the region of that name or moved there after having lived somewhere in Persia. Al-Nahrawān is a large district lying between Baghdad and Wāsiṭ and to the east; for more details see: Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʻAbd Allāh Yāqūt b. ʻAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī al-Baghdādī, *Muʻjam al-buldān,* Beirut, 1979, 5, 324-327, s.v. "nahrawān".

[3] The first Shīʻite Imām, ʻAlī, ruled as Caliph between the years 656-666 CE. He was killed by a Khārijite named ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam al-Murādī; for more details see: Veccia Vaglieri, L., "ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib", *EI*^{2}, I, 381-386.

[4] Abū Jaʻfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *al-Kharāʼij wa-l-jarāʼiḥ,* Muḥsin Kūtchebāghī Bāghī al-Tabrīzī (ed.), Qumm, 1404/1983, 1, 203; Abū ʻAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʻmān (known as al-Shaykh Mufīd), *al-Irshād,* Qumm, 1992, 1, 324; al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb,* Qumm, 1991, 2, 226; Abū ʻAlī al-Faḍl b. Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Iʻlām al-warā,* Qumm, 1970, 172-173; ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Hibat Allāh b. Abī al-Ḥadīd (known as Ibn Ḥadīd the Muʻtazilite), *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* M.A.F. Ibrāhīm (ed.), Cairo, 1967, 2, 291.

For his livelihood Mītham sold fruit in a stall, first watermelon and then dates; from the latter he received his epithet "al-Tammār".

Although we possess no details of his early life, such as the year and place of his birth, when he arrived in Kūfa, or when he became a Muslim, it is possible that he was raised as a Muslim or, at any rate, that he adopted Islam before he met 'Alī, since in his reply to the latter he said "God spoke the truth, and so did His Prophet and the Commander of the Faithful." On the other hand, his wording may have been nothing more than a socially acceptable response in the city of Kūfa, which at the time was predominantly Muslim and pro-'Alī.

Mītham's physical looks

Shī'ite sources provide no detailed physical description, although a number of traditions mention certain attributes in passing. Thus one tradition relates that Ḥabīb b. Muẓāhir al-Asadī [5] (d. 680 CE) met Mītham at a gathering of the Banū Asad tribe [6] and prophesied the latter's death in the following words: "I saw an old, bald man with a large belly who sold watermelons at the Dār al-Rizq, crucified because of his love for members of his Prophet's family." [7] The tradition speaks of Mītham's impending violent death, and also provides us with a physical description of sorts.

From another tradition we learn that he grew a beard. It is related that when he went on Pilgrimage in the year in which he was killed he came to the city of al-Madīna and visited Umm Salama (Hind bint Suhayl) (d. 679/680 CE). He introduced himself and asked to see Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, but was told that the latter was not there. Before he left Umm Salama called her slave girl and asked her to groom

[5] Known also as Ḥabīb b. Muẓāhir. He was among the seventy men killed with Ḥusayn at the battle of Karbalā' (680 CE). For more detail see: Taqī l-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī Ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* Teheran, 1383/1963, 99, n.º 374; Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, *Rijāl al-Barqī,* Teheran, 1963, 4, 7; Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-shaykh al-Ṭūsī,* Teheran, 1995, 60, n.º 512-3, 93, n.º 925-1, 100, n.º 971-1; 'Alī Muḥammad 'Alī Dukhkhayl, *Ḥabīb b. Muẓāhir al-Asadī,* Beirut, 1985, 15-56.

[6] For more on this tribe see: Kindermann, H., "Asad", *EI*^{2}, I, 683-684.

[7] Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* Ḥ. al-Muṣṭafawī (ed.), Mashhad, 1929, 78, n.º 133.

Mītham's beard; she also informed him that his beard would receive his blood and that he would be killed. [8]

If, again, this tradition is reliable, then it would seem that Mītham was physically quite similar to ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661) who, it is reported, "had a large belly and a huge beard which covered his chest, and was very bald." [9]

It can hardly be a coincidence that the physical traits of Mītham which are mentioned by Shīʻite sources are precisely those in which his similarity to ʻAlī was the greatest. It is as if these sources wish to stress that the two were not only similar in their knowledge and mental make up, but also in their physical aspect, perhaps out of a desire to raise Mītham's status as a companion and disciple of ʻAlī In fact, these traditions may bear an even more far-sweeping message, to wit that the Imams of Shīʻism, their companions and disciples all bore a great many similarities to each other, external as well as internal.

Mītham's children

Although Mītham was married we have no knowledge of when he married or who his wife was. He probably had five sons, [10] the

[8] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 324; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 80-81, n.º 136.

[9] For more on ʻAlī's physical looks see: Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Maqtal amīr al-muʼminīn ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib,* M.B. al-Maḥmūdī (ed.), Teheran, 1990, 67-68; *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 5, 178; al-Majlisī, M.B., *Biḥār al-anwār,* Beirut, 1984, 35, 5. ʻAlī was nicknamed "the bald man of Quraysh"; see: *al-Kharāʼij wal-jarāʼiḥ,* 2, 553; Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb al-Māzandarānī, *al-Manāqib,* H.R. al-Maḥallātī (ed.), Muʼassasat al-ʻAllāma li-l-Nashr, 1959, 2, 264; and 3, 284; quoted also in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 99, 28, n.º 4; and 38, 55, n.º 6; ʼAlī b. ʻĪsā al-Irbillī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī maʻrifat al-aʼimma,* Tabrīz, 1962, 1, 77 and 1, 353; Niʻmat Allāh al-Jazāʼirī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʼ,* Qumm, 1984, 405; Aḥmad b. ʻAlī al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj,* Mashhad, 1982, 1, 151; Abū Jaʻfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī li-l-Ṭūsī,* Qumm, 1993, 199, n.º 340-342; quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 33, 438, n.º 545; and 14; 211, n.º 7. Shīʻite sources explain that ʻAlī became bald as a result of frequently wearing a helmet; see: *al-Manāqib,* 3, 112, quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 35, 61, n.º 11.

[10] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Aʻlamī al-Ḥāʼirī in his *Dāʼirat al-maʻārif al-shīʻiyya* (Beirut, 1413/1993, 17, 544-545) writes that Mītham had three sons: Ḥamza, Shuʻayb and Ṣāliḥ. Other sources, however, mention five sons, although none mention a son by the name of Ḥamza except al-Aʻlamī; this is probably a mistake on the latter's part, as pointed out by al-Kashshī in his *Rijāl,* 1, 82, n.º 137.

first-born Ṣāliḥ [11] and the latter's brothers Shu'ayb, [12] 'Imrān, [13] Ya'qūb, [14] 'Alī [15] (and Ḥamza). [16]

Mītham's grandsons

The most prominent of Mītham's grandsons were the children of his son Shu'ayb, among them Ismā'īl, [17] Ya'qūb, [18] Ibrāhīm [19] and Isḥāq. [20] They all played an important role in the transmission of traditions in the name of various Imāms.

Mītham's great-grandchildren

Shī'ite biographical works mention the names of the sons of some of Mītham's grandchildren. The following are mentioned a number

[11] Abū Ḥakīm was in the habit of addressing Mītham as "Abū Ṣāliḥ"; it is the usual practice among Arabs to call a man by the name of his first-born son. See: *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 82, n.º 138; Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī,* Teheran, 1946, 7, 186, n.º 1; *Rijāl al-Barqī* 15, 16; Abī Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* al-Najaf, 1381/1961, 138, n.º 1457-2; al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* Qumm, 1991, 88, n.º 3. Ṣāliḥ b. Mītham was a companion of the Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (765-799 CE), of whom it is related that he once said to Ṣāliḥ: "I am very fond of both you and your father"; see: *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* 88, n.º 3.

[12] Transmitted in the name of Ibrāhīm b. Isḥāq al-Madā'inī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* 224, n.º 3007-9; *al-Kāfī,* 4, 31, n.º 3.

[13] He apparently worked as a corn measurer. See: *Biḥār al-anwār,* 30, 203, n.º 67; Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* M.J. al-Nā'īnī (ed.), Qumm, n.d., 292, n.º 785; *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* 118, n.º 1197-29; *al-Kāfī,* 8, 200, n.º 241; *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* 125, n.º 6.

[14] He was a companion of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn; for more details see: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'a,* Qumm, 1987, 16, 182, n.º 21299; *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* 149, n.º 1649-1; *Biḥār al-anwār,* 65, 25, n.º 46.

[15] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Nu'mān (known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ,* 'A.A. al-Ghafārī (ed.), Qumm, 1992, 270.

[16] *Biḥār al-anwār,* 42, 128, n.º 11.

[17] *Wasā'il al-shī'a,* 16, 301, n.º 21601.

[18] Transmitted from Abū 'Abd Allāh. For details about him see: *ibidem,* 15, 287, n.º 20537; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 379, n.º 1697; *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* 186, n.º 7; *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* 323, n.º 4836-53; *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* 450, n.º 1216.

[19] *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* 157, n.º 1741-45.

[20] *Ibidem,* 162, n.º 1835-139.

of times: Ismā'īl b. Shu'ayb, [21] Ya'qūb b. Shu'ayb, [22] Ibrāhīm b. Shu'ayb, [23] Isḥāq b. Shu'ayb [24] and 'Alī b. Ismā'īl. [25]

Mītham's rhetorical skills and eloquence

As we mentioned above, Mītham was of Persian origin. However, he grew up in Arabic-speaking Kūfa where he learned much from 'Alī and became quite skilled and eloquent in Arabic. Thus, for example, it is related that he approached 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād [26] (d. 686 CE) at the head of a delegation of merchants from the local market in order to ask him to dismiss the market laborer and hire another in his stead. Ibn Ziyād listened to what Mītham said and admired his logic, [27] proof that the latter was quite eloquent in Arabic.

According to another tradition when Mītham arrived in Kūfa and it became known that he was a companion of 'Alī he was seized by Ibn Ziyād's men and brought before him. Ibn Ziyād was told: "Mītham is one of 'Alī 's favorites." Ibn Ziyād replied: "Let us hear what this Persian has to say." He then asked Mītham: "Where is your Lord?" Mītham answered: "Lying in wait for all sinners, of which you are one." Whereupon Ibn Ziyād said: "Although you are a Persian, you are eloquent." [28] Once again we see that Ibn Ziyād praises Mītham's eloquence in connection with his Persian origins.

Yet a third tradition relates that when Mītham was crucified he began speaking of the virtues of the Hāshim clan [29] and the defects of

[21] *Ibidem,* 160, n.º 1790-94.

[22] *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* 450, n.º 1216; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 379, n.º 1697; *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* 186, n.º 7; *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* 323, n.º 4836-53.

[23] *Ibidem,* 157, n.º 1741-45.

[24] *Ibidem,* 162, n.º 1835-139.

[25] He is mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, who says that he was the first to have spoken about the ideology of the Imāmate. 'Alī b. Ismā'īl wrote two books, *al-Imāma* and *al-Istiḥqāq.* For more details see: Ibn al-Nadīm (Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. Abī Ya'qūb Isḥāq), *al-Fihrist,* Beirut, 1988, 223.

[26] For more details about him see: Robinson, C.F., "'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād", *EI*^{2}, X, 763-764.

[27] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 86, n.º 140.

[28] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 324.

[29] *Ibidem,* 1, 325; *I'lām al-warā,* 174; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 87, n.º 140; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā (also known as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī), *Khaṣā'iṣ al-a'imma,* Mashhad, 1985, 55; *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ,* 76; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Fattāl al-Nīshābūrī, *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn wa-baṣīrat al-mutta'aẓīn,* Qumm, 1966, 2, 288-289.

the Umayyad clan. He shouted at the top of his voice to the people and told them they should use the opportunity and come before he died in order to hear the divine secrets which 'Alī had taught him. He said: "By God, I will inform you about what will be until the Hour comes, and all the strife and discord to come." A great number of people gathered around him and wrote down what they heard from him, whereupon 'Amr b. Ḥurayth [30] hurried to Ibn Ziyād and said to him: "This slave has disgraced you." Ibn Ziyād then sent his guards with orders to cut off his tongue. [31] When they arrived and asked Mītham to hold out his tongue he said: "Did not the son of a whore declare that he would refute me and my master ['Alī]? Here is my tongue." [32] Then the guard cut off his tongue and his blood flowed. He died after three days. Clearly, Mītham's tongue was cut off because Ibn Ziyād feared that by his eloquence he would sway the people of Kūfa and make them rise up against the Umayyad rulers.

2. **Mītham and al-Khiḍr**

Shī'ite Imams associate with a number of legendary figures which supposedly do their bidding and help them perform miracles. One of these figures is al-Khiḍr, [33] who is said to have visited the Imam 'Alī more than once. Thus it is related that the latter when on pilgrimage [34] saw him circling the Ka'ba. On another occasion he appeared to 'Alī in a dream; when 'Alī asked him for advice al-Khiḍr showed him the palm of his hand on which the following verses were written in green letters:

[30] Shī'ite biographers describe him as an "enemy of God." For details see: *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 551; *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* 241, n.º 1.

[31] According to another tradition the guard put a bridle made of cord on his mouth, the first time such a thing had been done since the advent of Islam. For details see: *al-Irshād,* 1, 325; *I'lām al-warā,* 174; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 84-85.

[32] I.e., 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, who was an illegitimate son of an unknown father. It is related that his mother Marjāna was a prostitute. See: *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 87, n.º 140.

[33] A legendary character, identified by some commentators on the Qur'ān with Moses' servant boy mentioned in Q 18:59-81. Al-Khiḍr appears in many legends. His name, which means "green", was given to him because he was immersed in the spring of life. He is reported to have met the Prophet and other personalities as well. For more details about him see: Omar, I., "Khiḍr in Islamic Tradition", *Muslim World,* 83 (1993), 279-291; Wensinck, A.J., "al-Khiḍr", *EI*^{2}, IV, 902-905.

[34] *Biḥār al-anwār,* 3, 133-134, n.º 5, quoting Mufīd's *al-Majālis.*

You were dead and came alive / and before long will be dead again
So build a house in the everlasting abode / and leave the house of perdition. [35]

Al-Khiḍr visited ‘Alī again when the latter was praying at the seventh column of the mosque in al-Kūfa, [36] close to the Elephant Gate. [37] Al-Khiḍr appeared to him wearing two green outer garments, with two black locks of hair and a white beard. When ‘Alī finished

[35] *Ibidem,* 39, 133, n.º 4.

[36] The Kūfa mosque apparently had a number of columns, at some of which a prophet, angels or an Imām are variously reported to have prayed. Thus, for example, the third column was supposedly where Abraham prayed. For details see: *al-Kāfī,* 3, 493, n.º 8; Tāj al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Sha‘īrī, *Jāmi‘ al-akhbār,* Qumm, 1985, 70; Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām,* Teheran, 1945, 3, 251, n.º 10; *Wasā’il al-shī‘a,* 5, 264, chap. 47, n.º 6500; al-Mīrzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā’il,* Qumm, 1988, 3, 411-412, n.º 3887-5. The fifth column was the station of the angel Gabriel and the place where Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī prayed *(Tahdhīb al-aḥkām,* 6, 33, n.º 8; Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd b. Hilāl al-Thaqafī, *al-Ghārāt aw al-istinfār wal-ghārāt,* S.’A. al-Zahrā’ al-Ḥusaynī (ed.), Beirut, 1989, 2, 286). The seventh column was called “the column of Abraham and the prayer spot of the Imām ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.” A tradition maintains that praying there is a commendable deed and that every night sixty-thousand angels descend to pray there, none of whom will leave until the Day of Judgment *(al-Kāfī,* 3, 493, n.º 4 and 5; *Wasā’il al-shī‘a,* 5, 263, chap. 47, n.º 6497, 6498; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 516, n.º 993; *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* 35, n.º 72; *Jāmi‘ al-akhbār,* 70; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān (known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), *al-Mazār,* Qumm, 1993, 10-12, n.º 1-2.

[37] One of the gates of the Kūfa mosque (for details see: *Biḥār al-anwār,* 97, 407, n.º 65). The mosque had the following gates: The Gate of the Threshold *(bāb al-sudda)*, through which ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib entered the mosque; the Gate of Kinda *(bāb Kinda)*, on the mosque’s right side, facing west; the Gate of the *al-Anmāṭ (bāb al-anmāṭ)* facing the Gate of the Elephant; the Gate of the Elephant *(bāb al-fīl)*, originally named the Gate of the Snake *(bāb al-thu‘bān)*, opposite the direction of prayer *(qibla)*, which is not used today. According to tradition it was named “Gate of the Snake” because when ‘Alī preached in the mosque a snake would enter through this gate, come up to the pulpit, put its mouth in ‘Alī’s ear, speak to him, and then leave by the same gate. When ‘Alī was asked about the snake he said: “The matter is not as you think. This snake is in fact a demon judge who had a case which baffled him and so he came to me for advice. After I advised him he thanked me and left.” This episode is known in Shī‘ism as the “*ḥadīth* of the snake” and is counted among ‘Alī’s miracles. For more details see: *al-Kāfī,* 1, 396, n.º 6; *al-Irshād,* 1, 348-349; *I‘lām al-warā,* 179; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrūkh al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt,* M. M. Kūtchebāghī al-Tabrīzī (ed.), Qumm, 1983, 97, n.º 7 (the author writes that the snake’s name was ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī’s deputy among the demons); Shādhān b. Jibra’īl al-Qummī, *al-Faḍā’il,* Qumm, 1943, 70 (this author states that the snakes name was Darajān b. Mālik, ‘Alī’s deputy among Muslim demons). Tradition has it that when the Umayyad rulers heard about this wonder they took an elephant and tied it to the “Gate of the Snake” in order to make the people forget its association with ‘Alī’s snake, and so the gate became known as “Gate of the Elephant” to this day. For details see: Aḥmad al-Barāqī al-Najafī, *Ta’rīkh al-Kūfa,* Beirut, 1987, 54.

praying he bowed over him, kissed his head, took him by the hand and led him out through the Gate of Kinda. A crowd of people hurried after them and when they saw ʻAlī returning they told him: "We did not think you were safe with this horseman," whereupon ʻAlī told them: "That was my brother al-Khiḍr, who informed me that I was in a town which any thug who wants to attack it, God will strike him down. He asked me to warn everyone. After that I accompanied him on the way out, because he wanted to go to the rear side of Kūfa." [38]

According to yet another tradition al-Khiḍr came to visit ʻAlī at the seventh column of the mosque in Kūfa and encountered Mītham al-Tammār there. Al-Khiḍr greeted him and said: "Oh master of the column, greet the master of the house [39] for me and tell him that I first came to him but found him asleep." [40]

The gist of this tradition is that al-Khiḍr came to visit ʻAlī but found him asleep, whereupon he went to the mosque of Kūfa and had the reported conversation with Mītham. Since al-Khiḍr as an unearthly figure can according to Shī'ite belief be perceived only by a prophet or a true believer, this tradition aims at stressing Mītham's strong faith and his close association with ʻAlī [41] The epithet by

[38] *Al-Amālī li-l-Ṭūsī,* 51, n.º 67-36; quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 39, 130-131, n.º 1; 97, 392-393, n.º 23.

[39] The word "the house" *(al-dār)* here refers to "House of the Emigration" *(dār al-hijra)*, a Shī'ite epithet for the city of Kūfa which came into use after the "emigration" *(hijra)* of ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib to that city from the city of al-Madīna. ʻAlī then became known as "master of the house" *(ṣāḥib al-dār)* (for details see: *al-Kharā'ij wa-l-jarā'iḥ,* 1, 192, quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 41, 231, n.º 2; and 53, 58. It should be noted that the epithet *dār al-hijra* was originally given to the city of al-Madīna after Muḥammad had emigrated there from Mecca in 622 CE, and was only later applied by the Shī'ites to Kūfa. See *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 5, 117; 6, 127; 14, 6; and 17, 191; ʻAlī b. Yūnis al-Nabāṭī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm ilā mustaḥiqqī al-taqdīm,* Najaf, 1964, 2, 216; Nūr al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Ṣawārim al-muhraqa fī naqd al-ṣawā'iq al-muḥriqa,* J.D. al-Ḥusaynī (ed.), Teheran, 1947, 329; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān (known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), *al-Jamal wa-l-nuṣra li-sayyid al-'itra fī ḥarb al-Baṣra,* Qumm, 1993, 263. This is part of a general Shī'ite tendency to equate ʻAlī with the Prophet and Kūfa with al-Madīna. All Shī'ite Imāms are deemed to share a number of traits with the Prophet (for more details see: Bar Asher, M. M., *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shī'ism,* Leiden and Jerusalem, 1999, 140-141). The particular aspect of similarity between the Prophet and ʻAlī which is promoted here is the fact that both emigrated to another city, and that both then settled in that city, lived out their lives in it, and were buried there.

[40] *Al-Manāqib,* 2, 246; quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 39, 131, n.º 2.

[41] ʻAlī had four intimate disciples *(ḥawārī)*: ʻAmr b. al-Ḥamiq al-Khuzā'ī, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, Mītham al-Tammār and Uways al-Qaranī. The Prophet is said to have had three such intimate disciples: Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 36/656), al-Miqdād b.

which al-Khiḍr addressed Mītham, "master of the column," probably alludes to the latter's future death by crucifixion.

3. **Mītham al-Tammār as exegesist**

'Alī is said to have taught Mītham the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the circumstances under which various verses and chapters were revealed *(asbāb al-nuzūl)*. The author of *al-Dharī'a* mentions a book called *Commentary of Mītham al-Tammār* [42] which, however, is not extant. According to Shī'ite sources Mītham taught Qur'ānic exegesis to 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (d. 687 CE). A tradition states that Mītham met Ibn 'Abbās [43] in al-Madīna and said to him: "Ask what you want about the meaning of the Qur'ān, for 'Alī taught me the circumstances of Qur'ānic revelation as well as the interpretation of the Qur'ān." Ibn 'Abbās called his slave girl and told her to bring him an inkwell and a sheet of paper; he then began asking Mītham and writing down his answers. [44] If this tradition is reliable then Ibn 'Abbās can be said to have possessed elements of Qur'ān exegesis going back to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

Al-Kashshī in his biography of Mītham quotes a tradition which relates that when Mītham had finished dictating his Qur'ān commentary to Ibn 'Abbās he proceeded to tell him about his future murder at the hand of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād. This revelation caused Ibn 'Abbās to suspect Mītham of being a soothsayer and as a result he wanted to

'Amr b. Tha'laba (d. 33/653) and Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (Jundub b. Junāda b. Qays al-Ghifārī) (d. 32/652). The Imām Ḥasan had two: Sufyān b. Abī Laylā al-Hamdānī and Ḥudhayfa b. Usayd b. Khālid al-Ghifārī (d. 42/662). Every man killed with Ḥusayn at the battle of Karbalā' (680 CE) is considered to have been a *ḥawārī* of the latter. His son 'Alī (d. 713/1313) had three intimate disciples: Yaḥyā b. Umm Ṭawīl, Abū Khālid al-Kābulī and Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/713). According to Shī'ite tradition such *ḥawārī* will be the first to enter Heaven on the Day of Judgment, before the rest of the Shī'ite believers (for more detail see: *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn,* 2, 282; *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ,* 61).

[42] Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-shī'a,* Teheran, 1941, 4, 317.

[43] His full name was 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās Ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī (619-687 CE), a cousin of the Prophet from his father's side. He was born in Mecca and, as an avid adherent of the Prophet, transmitted many traditions in his name. He participated together with 'Alī in the battles of the Camel and Ṣiffīn. He, too, is said to have written a commentary on the Qur'ān. See: Veccia Vaglieri, L., "'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās", *EI*^{2}, I, 40-41.

[44] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 81, n.º 137.

tear up the dictated commentary he had written down. But Mītham said to him: "Keep what you have heard from me. If what I told you turns out to be the truth, conceal it, and if it turns out to be false, tear it up." A few days later what Mītham predicted did indeed come to pass. [45]

If this tradition is reliable it provides yet another indication that Ibn 'Abbās possessed elements of a commentary by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Since according to this tradition Mītham had said to Ibn 'Abbas: "Ask anything you want about the interpretation of the Qur'ān," it also tells us that Mītham was familiar with the interpretation of the entire Qur'ān.

These traditions clearly show that Mītham was in possession of commentaries which Ibn 'Abbās did not possess. Otherwise of course the latter would not have written down what Mītham dictated to him. Shī'ite writings thus differentiate the two, both disciples of 'Alī. Mītham was obviously the more senior of the two, a fact which is further supported by Ibn 'Abbās' agreeing without protest to write down what Mītham dictated to him.

4. **Mītham al-Tammār as author**

A number of Shī'ite sources relate that Mītham's sons, in particular Ya'qūb and Ṣāliḥ, kept copies of their father's books and read in them on many occasions. Thus it is told that Ya'qūb came into the presence of the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir [46] (d. 732 CE) and said to him: "I read in my father's books that 'Alī had said to my father: 'Oh Mītham, love him who loves the family of Muḥammad even if he is immoral and dissolute, and hate him who hates the family of Muḥammad even if he fasts, lives an upright life and says 'For those who believe and perform good deeds are the best people of the land.'" [47] If this tradition is reliable, it points to the existence of a number of books composed by Mītham, in which he wrote down what 'Alī had dictated to him over the years. In fact, since Mītham was a

[45] *Ibidem,* 81, n.º 137; *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf,* 4, 317.

[46] The fifth Imām of Twelver Shī'ism. For more details on him see: Kohlberg, E., "Muḥammad b. 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn", *EI*^{2}, VII, 397-400.

[47] *Wasā'il al-shī'a,* 16, 182; *Biḥār al-anwār,* 23, 390.

close associate of ʻAlī for a period of some five years (656-661 CE) he had ample time to record ʻAlī's legal rulings, Qur'ānic commentaries, comments on the world beyond and more. [48] Yaʻqūb's statement "I read in my father's books" can only mean that Mītham had written more than one book.

Elsewhere Mītham's son Ṣāliḥ is quoted as having found the following statement in "a book by Mītham": "We spent a night with the Commander of the Faithful ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (may he rest in peace)."

5. **Mītham as a transmitter of *ḥadīth***

Mītham played an important role in the life of the Imām ʻAlī, and was an important source of Shīʻite traditions. His reports are quoted very frequently in Shīʻite books of *ḥadīth.*

Proof of this is provided by the following tradition. Mītham's son Ṣāliḥ once said to the Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir: "Tell me this *ḥadīth.*" Al-Bāqir replied: "Did you not hear *ḥadīth*s from your father?," to which Ṣāliḥ said: "No, I was a child." [49] This tradition shows that al-Bāqir considered Mītham's *ḥadīth*s trustworthy.

Mītham transmitted a great many sayings of ʻAlī, including answers to questions which Mītham had posed to him. However, it is impossible to know whether every *ḥadīth* in his name which purports to report something which ʻAlī had said actually does so or whether some or even most of these were written later and falsely attributed to him.

Mītham also reported the utterances of others beside ʻAlī. [50] Among them are Saʻd al-Khaffāf [51] and Ibn ʻAbbās. [52] Many also transmitted what Mītham said. The most important of these were his

[48] For details see: *ibidem,* 27, 83, n.º 24; 27, 130, n.º 121; 27, 220, n.º 5.

[49] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 81, n.º 136.

[50] For details see: *Kashf al-ghumma,* 1, 385; and 1, 396; *al-Ghārāt,* 2, 286; *Biḥār al-anwār,* 14, 444; and 40, 276.

[51] For details see: *Mustadrak,* 16, 170. His full name was Saʻd b. Ṭarīf al-Ḥanẓalī al-Iskāf, a client of the Banū Tamīm, al-Kūfī or, according to others, al-Duʻalī. For more details about him see: *Rijāl al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī,* 115, n.º 1147-17; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ghaḍā'irī, *Rijāl Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī,* Qumm, 1944, 3, 104; *Rijāl al-ʻallāma al-Ḥillī,* 226, n.º 1; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 215, n.º 384; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 456, n.º 200.

[52] For details see: *Biḥār al-anwār,* 39, 293.

own children and the Imams [53] 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī, al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.

6. **The Prophet Muḥammad's prophecies about Mītham**

The Prophet Muḥammad lived several decades before Mītham and never met him. Nevertheless, Shī'ite tradition insists that the Prophet spoke about Mītham's origins and character traits, as well as about the role he would play in support of 'Alī.

As we mentioned at the beginning of section 1 above, according to one tradition when 'Alī asked Mītham for his name he answered "Sālim", whereupon 'Alī said: "The Messenger of God told me that your name was Mītham." Mītham then answered: "God spoke the truth and so did His Prophet. That is indeed my name." [54]

According to another tradition, also mentioned in section 1 above, the Prophet's wife Umm Salama (Hind bint Suhayl, [55] d. 679/680 CE; see above, section 1) said that the Prophet recommended Mītham to 'Alī numerous times. This tradition relates that Mītham performed the pilgrimage in the year of his death (60/671). During his trip to Arabia he also visited the city of al-Madīna and went to the Prophet's house looking for Ḥusayn b. 'Alī [56] (d. 680 CE). He did not find him, but encountered the Prophet's wife. When he introduced himself to her she said to him: "I heard the Prophet more than once urge 'Alī to take good care of you." [57]

In these Shī'ite traditions we can discern a double purpose: one, to demonstrate that the Prophet knew of Mītham although he never met

[53] For details see: Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt,* Najaf, 1977, 135, n.º 2, and 269, n.º 9; *al-Mazār,* 48, n.º 3.

[54] *Al-Kharā'ij wal-jarā'iḥ,* 1, 203; *al-Irshād,* 1, 324; *Irshād al-qulūb,* 2, 226; *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 2, 291.

[55] Her full name was Hind bint Suhayl (the latter known also as Abū Umayya) al-Qurashiyya al-Makhzūmiyya; the Prophet married her in the year 14/625. She reached old age and died in Madīna. The exact year of her death is in doubt. For more details on her see: Roded, R., "Umm Salama Hind", *EI*^{2}, X, 856; Stern, G. H., *Marriage in Early Islam,* London, 1939, 76, 79, 90, 107, 121.

[56] The son of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the third Shī'ite Imām. For details about him see: Veccia Vaglieri, L., "al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib", *EI*^{2}, III, 607-615.

[57] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 324; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 80-81, n.º 136; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba,* 'Alī Muḥammad al-Jāwī (ed.), Beirut, 1992, 6, 316-318, n.º 8478.

him, and that the Prophet informed ‘Alī that Mītham would one day be a disciple and supporter of his; second, to show that Mītham did not join ‘Alī because of the objective political circumstances in Kūfa at the time, but that his career was predestined by God and told to His Prophet. In short, the traditions reflect a Shī‘ite claim that God Himself chose ‘Alī’s companions and supporters.

7. ‘Alī prophesies Mītham’s death and informs him of it

A Shī‘ite Imām is not only considered to be wiser and more knowledgeable than other mortals; he is also believed to possess knowledge of the occult. [58] An Imām’s wisdom at least equals that of angels and prophets. [59] Imāms are in fact said to possess certain kinds of knowledge denied to the former. [60] Imams can renew and add to their knowledge, [61] so that nothing stays hidden from them. [62] The sources of an Imām’s knowledge are various; he is a “receiver” of inspiration, who can hear the speech of the angels. [63] He is in possession of certain books of occult knowledge: *al-Ṣaḥīfa* (literally: page), [64] which teaches what is permitted and what is forbidden; *Muṣḥaf Fāṭima* (literally: the codex of Fāṭima), containing revelations of the Angel Gabriel to Fāṭima after the Prophet’s death; and *al-Jafr* (literally: divination), consisting of several compositions (in the manner of the Pentateuch and the Gospels), and others. [65]

[58] Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī (known as al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq), *‘Uyūn akhbār al-riḍā,* M.Ḥ. al-Lājūrdī (ed.), Teheran, 1958, 1, 213, n.º 1; *idem, al-Khiṣāl,* ’A.A. al-Ghifārī (ed.), Qumm, 1982, 2, 428, n.º 5, quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 25, 116, n.º 1.

[59] *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt,* 109, n.º 2.

[60] Bar Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis,* 145.

[61] Amir-Moezzi, M. A., *The Divine Guide in Early Shī‘ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam,* D. Streight (transl.), New York, 1994, 71-72.

[62] *Biḥār al-anwār,* 26, 109, chap. 6: “Knowledge of the heavens, the earth, Paradise, the Fire [...] are not concealed from them.”

[63] According to Shī‘ite belief Imāms are “receivers” *(muḥaddath)* of what angels say; unlike the prophets they can hear the angels but not see them, and the knowledge they receive this way is not “revelation” *(waḥy)* but only “inspiration” *(ilhām)*. See: Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 70-71.

[64] Also called *al-muṣḥaf, al-ṣaḥīfa al-jāmi‘a* and *al-jāmi‘a.*

[65] Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 73-75. For more details on the written sources said to have been in possession of the Imāms, see: Kohlberg, E., “Authoritative Scrip-

Furthermore, Imāms are said to know the future, and to be able to prophesy the death of any man, [66] when and where he will die, and who will kill him, if he is to die a violent death. In fact, Imāms are credited with knowing a person's fate in the afterworld and can intercede on someone's behalf to enable him to enter Heaven. [67] Many a man has had his fear of death removed after an Imām informed him that he, the Imām, would see to it that the dying man would be admitted to Heaven. [68]

However, these powers are ascribed to deceased Imāms. The type of intercession in the *ḥadīth* in question here, however, is different: the Imām is said to have interceded in this world, while still alive. The ability to perform such an intercession is usually ascribed only to the

tures in Early Imami Shī'ism", in E. Patlagean and A. Le Boulluec (eds.), *Les Retours aux Ecritures: Fondamentalismes Presents et Passés,* Paris, 1991, 295-307.

[66] It is an article of faith in Islam that there are things which only God can know; one of these is when and under what circumstances a man will die. Supposed proof of this is the following Qur'ānic verse (Q 31:34): "No soul can know on what soil you shall die." The interpretation of this verse is in dispute. Some regard it as referring to the place of death (see, for example: Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān,* Cairo, 1373/1954), 21, 87-89), while others interpret it as referring to the time of death (see: Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* Beirut, 1995, 8, 96). At any rate, the knowledge ascribed to Imāms in this matter certainly contradicts the accepted creed according to which only God knows a person's ultimate fate. The Shī'ite explanation for this supposed contradiction is that their Imām cannot change the fate decreed by God, and can know this fate only if God deigns to inform him of it. We should point out as well that according to some opinions fate can be changed. Thus, in the view of the ancient Mu'tazilites, a man who dies a violent death will not live the life that he was destined to live. See: I.W. Montgomery-Watt, "Adjal", *EI*^{2}, I, 204.

[67] Promises of a place in Heaven are reported to have been made by a number of Imāms. For example, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765/1363) made such a promise to Zayd al-Shaḥḥām. See: *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt,* 264, n.º 8; and 265, n.º 5; *Biḥār al-anwār,* 47, 78, n.º 56. Zayd al-Shaḥḥām, whose epithets were Abū Usāma al-Azdī and Abū Usāma al-Shaḥḥām, was a Kūfan who transmitted traditions in the names of the Imāms Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim. For more details on him see: *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* 1, 396, n.º 460.

[68] In Sunnī Islam such intercession is usually ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad, of whom it is said that on the Day of Judgment he would intercede in favor of Muslims who have sinned. Angels, martyrs and true believers have been deemed to possess the power of intercession as well, after the Prophet's death. Shī'ism extends such abilities to its Imāms as well. For more details on the Shī'ite view on intercession see: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān al-'Ukburī al-Baghdādī, *Awā'il al-maqālāt fī l-madhāhib wal-mukhtārāt,* Mahdī Muḥaqqiq (ed.), Teheran, 1992, 29. Muṭṭahar al-Ḥillī represents the opinion of a minority which believes that Imāms do not possess the power of intercession. For details see: Schmidtke, S., *The Theology of al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī,* Berlin, 1991, 238.

Prophet Muḥammad. [69] But as we pointed out above, Shī‘ism wishes to ascribe to its Imāms powers equal to those of the prophets. We should therefore not wonder that according to Shī‘ite tradition ‘Alī informed Mītham that he would be killed, that his hands and feet would be cut off and that he would be crucified in Kūfa, at a place called *Raḥbat al-ṣayārif,* on a beam taken from a date palm cut down in *Kunāsa.* [70] He added that the trunk of the palm would be cut into four pieces and that Mītham would be crucified on one of them. ‘Alī also named three others who would be crucified on the three remaining pieces of the trunk: Ḥujr b. ‘Adī al-Kindī [71] (d. 671), Muḥammad b. Aktham [72] and Khālid b. Mas‘ūd. [73] Mītham, who wanted to be certain that ‘Alī’s prophecy came true, asked his son Ṣaliḥ to carve his name on the trunk of the date palm and to drive a nail into it. Tradition further has it that when Mītham was eventually crucified on the fourth part of the date trunk he did indeed find his inscribed name and the nail. [74]

Shī‘ite tradition goes on to relate that ‘Alī went with Mītham and showed him where he would be crucified and also pointed out the date palm. Mītham would then visit the palm, pray next to it and say to it: “I am blessed by a date palm, which will in future possess a great importance.” [75] He would strike the palm with his hand and say: “Oh date palm, you have not been nourished except for my sake, and I have not been nourished except for your sake.” [76] Mītham also vis-

[69] For more details on this topic and on intercession in general see: Wensinck, A.J. and Gimaret, D., “Shafā‘a”, *EI*^{2}, IX, 177-179.

[70] The name of a rubbish dump in Kūfa. For details see: *Mu‘jam al-buldān,* 4, 481, s.v. *Kunāsa.*

[71] His full name was Ḥujr b. ‘Adī b. Jabala al-Kindī, a Companion of the Prophet known for his bravery. He accompanied the Prophet and fought with him in the battle of Qādisiyya. Then he attached himself to ‘Alī and fought with him in the battles of the Camel and Ṣiffīn. He resided in Kūfa and rebelled against the Umayyads, whereupon he was killed on the orders of Mu‘āwiya at Marj ‘Adhrā’ together with a number of his associates. For more details on him see: Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām,* Beirut, 1986, 2, 169.

[72] This name does not appear in the Shī‘ite biographical literature.

[73] This name does not appear either in the Shī‘ite biographical literature.

[74] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 85-86, n.º 140, quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār,* 42, 131, n.º 14; *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ,* 76; *Rawḍat al-wā‘iẓīn,* 2, 288; *al-Irshād,* 1, 323-324; *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 2, 292; *Kashf al-ghumma,* 1, 277; al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-yaqīn fī faḍā’il amīr al-mu’minīn,* Ḥ. al-Darkāhī (ed.), Qumm, 1990, 77; *al-Manāqib,* 2, 271; al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, *Nahj al-ḥaqq wa-kashf al-ṣidq,* Qumm, 1986, 242.

[75] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 323-324; *Khaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma,* 54.

[76] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 84; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 357, n.º 1593; *Khaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma,* 54; *al-Faḍā’il,* 103; *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 2, 293.

ited the spot where he was fated to be crucified; there he informed 'Amr b. Ḥurayth [77] (d. 704 CE) who lived nearby that he, Mītham, would soon be his neighbor. 'Amr thought that by this Mītham meant that he intended to buy the house of one of his neighbors, Ibn Mas'ūd or Ibn Ḥakīm. [78] When Mītham was duly crucified 'Amr saw him and quoted the Qur'ānic verse: "We belong to God, and to him we return." [79] 'Amr spread the story of Mītham and what he had told him. He regularly visited the spot where he was crucified and ordered his slave girl to wash and sweep the ground underneath the beam. He would pray there and ask God to have mercy on Mītham. [80] Mītham had asked 'Alī for the identity of his killer. 'Alī told him that he would be killed by 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād [81] (d. 686 CE), son of Marjāna, [82] son of a brazen slave girl, "an infidel and a bastard." [83]

[77] According to another tradition his name was 'Amr b. Khurayq. See: *Khaṣā'iṣ al-a'imma,* 54. His full name was 'Amr b. Ḥurayth b. 'Amr b. 'Uthmān b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr al-Makhzūmī al-Qurashī Abū Sa'īd. He was born two years before the *hijra* and became a leading Companion. He ruled Kūfa for Ziyād and later for his son 'Ubayd Allāh. For more details about him see: Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba,* 'A.M. al-Bajāwī (ed.), Beirut, 1992, 4, 616, n.º 5812; Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Muṣ'ab b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī, *Kitāb nasab Quraysh,* E. Lévi-Provençal (ed.), Cairo, 1982, 333; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-I'lām,* Beirut, 1986, 5, 76; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām,* 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (ed.), Beirut, 1990 (events and deaths in the years 61-80 AH), 492-493; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-ta'rīkh,* Beirut, 2004, 21, 23, 192, 399, 520, 3:70, 78, 143, 228, 236, 252, 256, 257, 294, 300, 384, 413, 530.

[78] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 324; *al-Faḍā'il,* 103; *I'lām al-warā,* 173.

[79] Q 2:156; this verse is often recited by people who are in trouble.

[80] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 325; *al-Faḍā'il,* 104; *Biḥār al-anwār,* 42, 138, n.º 19; *Irshād al-qulūb,* 2, 225; *Khaṣā'iṣ al-a'imma,* 54-55.

[81] The ruler *(amīr)* of Iraq, his full name was 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. 'Ubayd, known as Ibn Ziyād, Abū Sufyān and Abū Ḥafṣ. After the death of his father Ziyād (672-3 CE) he was appointed ruler of Nīsābūr and Khurāsān (672 CE), then of Baṣra (674 CE) and later of both Kūfa and Baṣra (679-680 CE), by the Caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya. For more details on him see: Robinson, C.F., "'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād", *EI²,* VI, 548-556.

[82] Marjāna is the name of the mother of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād and the wife of Ziyād b. Abīh, also known as Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān (d. 673 CE). She was a well-known slave girl, and the tradition in question mentions her origins as a mark of contempt. For more on Marjāna see: Sindawi, Kh., *The* maqātil *in Shī'ite Literature,* unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Ramat Gan, 2000) 226, note 2 (Hebrew).

[83] The two words here translated as "infidel" *('utull)* and "bastard" *(zanīm)* appear in Q 68:13. For more details see: Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī (known as al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq), *Ma'ānī al-akhbār,* 'A.A. al-Ghifārī (ed.), Qumm, 1982, 149; 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī,* Qumm, 1983, 20, 381; Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Astarābādī, *Ta'wīl al-āyāt al-Ẓāhira fī faḍl al-'itra al-ṭāhira,* Qumm, 1988,

Historical sources report that when ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād become ruler of Kūfa he heard what ‘Alī had said to Mītham about the date palm in Kunāsa. Ibn Ziyād mistrusted the palm and ordered it cut down. A carpenter bought it and cut it into four pieces.

8. **Mītham’s death**

Three days after being crucified Mītham was stabbed with a spear; blood then flowed from his nose and mouth, and at the end of the day he died. According to Shī‘ite sources he died ten days before Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī [84] (d. 680) arrived in Iraq. [85] From other sources we know that Ḥusayn came to Karbalā’ on the 1st of Muḥarram in the year 61 AH. [86] Mītham’s death thus occurred on the 23rd of Dhū l-Ḥijja in the year 61 AH (23.9.679 CE).

9. **Mītham’s burial**

Mītham died, as mentioned above, three days after his crucifixion. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād posted guards next to the body in order to prevent it being taken and buried. To further ensure that no one would take the body and bury it fires were lit around it. Nevertheless, seven sellers of dates *(tammārīn)* [87] decided to steal the body at night and carry it away on a plank of wood. They carried out their plan and succeeded in removing the body without attracting the notice of the guards. The body was taken to a stream in the territory of the Murād

687; Zayn al-Dīn b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad (known as “the second martyr”), *Kashf al-rayba ‘an aḥkām al-ghayba,* Najaf, 1970, 40. Here these harsh descriptions refer to ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād; see: *al-Irshād,* 1, 322; *al-Kharā’ij wal-jarā’iḥ,* 1, 202-203; *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 85, n.º 140; *Rawḍat al-wā‘iẓīn,* 2, 288; *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 2, 290.

[84] Ḥusayn was the third Shī‘ite Imām, after his father ‘Alī and his brother Ḥasan. He died at Karbalā’ in the year 680 CE. For more details see: Veccia Vaglieri, L., “al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib”, *EI*^{2}, III, 607-615.

[85] *Al-Irshād,* 1, 325; *I’lām al-warā,* 174; *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha,* 2, 294.

[86] Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā al-Azdī al-Ghāmidī al-Kūfī Abū Mikhnaf, *Waq‘at al-Ṭaff,* M. H. al-Yūsufī al-Gharawī (ed.), Qumm, 1367/1947, 180; ‘Alī b. Mūsā Ibn Ja‘far b. Ṭāwūs, *al-Malhūf ‘alā qatlā al-ṭufūf,* S. F. Tabrīziyān “al-Ḥassūn” (ed.), Teheran, 1414/1993, 139.

[87] These were quite likely colleagues of Mītham, who had a shop for selling dates in Kūfa.

tribe, [88] and there it was buried. The plank on which the body was carried was thrown away elsewhere in order not to disclose the burial site. In the morning the guards were surprised to find the body gone; they looked for it, but in vain. [89]

The burial site remained hidden for some time, in order to prevent the desecration of the grave by the rulers of the Umayyad dynasty [90] (661-750 CE). We do not know when it's location became known, perhaps during the 'Abbāsid period, in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (ruled 786-809 CE) who discovered 'Alī's tomb while on a hunt [91] (in 791 CE). He built a dome over the tomb, perhaps in order to placate the Shī'ites and present to the world an image of tolerance. Today the grave is shown on the south side of the house of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, near the Kūfa mosque, next to the main road from Kūfa to Najaf. The tomb, with a sanctuary in the middle, was covered by a medium-sized white dome. The tomb was rebuilt by Muḥammad Rashād Mirza al-Najafī in 1968, who enlarged the dome and added galleries for the pilgrims and a large courtyard. [92]

10. Why did Mītham refrain from the Shī'ite practice of dissimulation?

"Dissimulation" *(taqiyya)* is a well-established and approved mode of behavior among Shī'ites. [93] One accepted definition is the following: "Concealment of the truth and hiding one's belief in it from the sinners, and refusing their help, if any harm can otherwise

[88] The Banū Murād was an Arabian tribe belonging to the Madhḥij group of tribes, originally from southern Arabia, who later moved to the north of the peninsula. For more details on them see: 'Alī, A.A., "Banū Murād", *EI*^{2}, VII, 591-592.

[89] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 83, n.º 138.

[90] The Umayyad rulers were known to disinter and mutilate the bodies of their dead enemies. Thus, for example, the Umayyad commander al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (d. 714 CE) attempted, without success, to locate the body of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in order to mutilate it. For more details see Sindawi, Kh., "The Two Ghariyy Towers in Kūfa and the Tomb of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Shī'ite Literature", *al-Karmel,* 23-24 (2002-2003), 125.

[91] For detail on this incident see: *al-Karmel,* 130-131.

[92] *Ta'rīkh al-Kūfa,* 86; www.refed.net/towns/kufa.html (06-04-06); www.wadyalgary.com (06-04-06).

[93] For more on the doctrine of dissimulation see: Kohlberg, E., "Some Imāmī Shī'ī Views on *Taqiyya*", *JAOS,* 95 (1975), 395-402; Meyer, E., "Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der *Taqiyya*", *Der Islam,* 57 (1980), 246-280.

ensue to religion and to life in this world." [94] Such "dissimulation" is a religious duty for Twelver Shī'ites in case of necessity, and permitted under more favorable circumstances. According to Shaykh Mufīd: "It is permissible with respect to [the commandments of] religion in case of fear for one's life, but also in lesser cases, of fear for one's possessions and to arrange various matters." [95] It is also permissible to dissimulate in speech in case of necessity.

The political repression suffered by Shī'ites made dissimulation a necessary part of their creed, vital for believers' personal survival. Shī'ite sources quote Imāms' utterances in favor of dissimulation. Thus the Imām al-Bāqir is quoted as saying: "Dissimulation is Paradise for the believer," [96] and al-Ṣādiq is said to have proclaimed: "Whoever lacks dissimulation lacks religion." [97]

The question now arises, if dissimulation is permitted in order to survive, why did not Mītham avail himself of this stratagem? Muḥammad al-Muẓaffarī gives a number of possible reasons why Mītham did not dissimulate: [98]

A. Mītham may have thought that by sacrificing himself he was protecting 'Alī's reputation. He thus chose not to dissimulate because of his great love and respect for his former patron.

B. It is related that 'Alī had warned Mītham that 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād would demand that he repudiate 'Alī in return for sparing his life and the 'Alī forbade him to do so. [99] So when Mītham was caught he preferred death to saving his life by means of dissimulation.

C. Shī'ite dissimulation is only permitted if certain conditions apply. Thus the Imām al-Bāqir is quoted as saying: "Dissimulation should only be used to prevent bloodshed but when bloodshed is inevitable, no dissimulation is required." [100] Mītham thus may have re-

[94] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān (known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), *Sharḥ 'aqā'id al-ṣadūq aw taṣḥīḥ al-i'tiqād,* Tabrīz, 1371/1951, 66.

[95] *Awā'il al-maqālāt,* 55.

[96] *Biḥār al-anwār,* 72, 432, n.º 94, quoting *al-Kāfī.*

[97] Abū al-Faḍl 'Alī al-Ṭabarsī, *Mishkāt al-anwār fī ghurar al-akhbār,* Najaf, 1951, 39ff.

[98] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Muẓaffarī, *Mītham al-Tammār,* Najaf, 1944, 58-62.

[99] For more details see also: *al-Kharā'ij wal-jarā'iḥ,* 1, 229; *Khaṣā'iṣ al-a'imma,* 54; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 357, n.º 1593.

[100] *Al-Kāfī,* 2, 220, n.º 15; Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd al-'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī,* H.R. al-Maḥallātī (ed.), Teheran, 1960, 2, 271, n.º 72.

fused to use dissimulation because the conditions for its use were not met.

D. Mītham may have preferred his religion to his own life.

E. 'Alī is reported to have repeatedly told Mītham about his impending fate and the great reward he would receive in Heaven because of his martyr's death. Mītham may therefore have decided not to dissimulate in order not to put in danger his future reward. [101]

Mītham would seem to have been resigned to his fate, as shown by the following tradition: As Mītham was being taken to be executed on the orders of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād he encountered a man who said to him: "You could have extricated yourself from this, Mītham," to which Mītham replied: "By God, this date palm was taken down just for me, and I was nourished just for it." [102]

But in fact the doctrine of dissimulation did not yet exist in Mītham's times, but developed only later, although Shī'ite sources date its roots to the lifetime of the Prophet himself. It is therefore quite likely that the various traditions involving Mītham's knowledge of the principles of this doctrine were formulated much later for the express purpose of showing its antiquity.

11. **What others wrote about Mītham**

Al-Najāshī mentions a book by Hisham b. Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī [103] (d. 819 CE) entitled *The Deaths of Rushayd, Mītham and Juwayriyya (Maqtal Rushayd wa-Mītham wa-Juwayriyya)*. [104] From its title the book, which has not survived, would appear to have described the deaths of three of 'Alī's close associates, [105] Rushayd

[101] For details see: *al-Kharā'ij wal-jarā'iḥ,* 1, 229; *Khaṣā'iṣ al-a'imma,* 54; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 257, n.º 1593.

[102] *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 80, n.º 134; *al-Irshād,* 1, 325.

[103] A Shī'ite historian and resident of Kūfa, deemed to be an expert on pre-Islamic Arab history. Most of his many works are lost. For more details about him see: *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* 425, n.º 1166; *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd,* 368, n.º 1646; *Rijāl al-'allāma al-Ḥillī,* 179, n.º 3.

[104] *Rijāl al-Najāshī,* 435, n.º 1166.

[105] Shī'ite sources mention a number of 'Alī's close associates: Uways b. 'Āmir b. Anīs al-Qaranī, 'Amr b. al-Ḥamiq al-Khuzā'ī, Rushayd al-Hajarī, Mītham al-Tammār, Kumayl b. Ziyād al-Nakha'ī, Qanbar the servant of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, 'Abd Allāh b. Yaḥyā, Jundub b. Zuhayr al-'Āmirī, Banū 'Āmir the followers of 'Alī, Ḥabīb b. Maẓar

al-Hajarī, [106] Mītham al-Tammār and Juwayriyya b. Mushir al-'Abdī, [107] all of whom died in the year 679.

In modern times Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Muẓaffarī appears to have been the first to have focused renewed attention on the figure of Mītham al-Tammār. Some sixty years ago (1364/1944) the Ḥaydariyya Press of the Murtaḍawiyya Library published his eighty-eight-page monograph, *Mītham al-Tammār* in which al-Muẓaffarī analyzed Mītham's character from a Shī'ite point of view and collected all the various traditions about his life and death.

Another book which exists for the moment in manuscript form only, [108] also entitled *Mītham al-Tammār,* is a translation from Persian by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Muqarram [109] (d. 1971). Although we have not been able to obtain a copy of the manuscript, its contents would appear to be quite similar to the afore-mentioned book by al-Muẓaffarī.

Ten years ago a short play in verse entitled "Mītham al-Tammār, Revolutionary on the Cross" *(Mītham al-Tammār ... thā'ir fawqa l-ṣalīb)* was published by Muḥammad Taqiyy Jamāl al-Dīn [110] in the journal *al-Fikr al-jadīd* (13-14, June 1996). The play takes up twenty-five pages of average size. The published play opens with a biographical sketch of the hero. The play itself takes place in the year 60 AH and describes the events surrounding Mītham's death from a Shī'ite religious point of view.

al-Asadī, al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Allāh al-A'war al-Hamdhānī, Mālik b. al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Jadalī, and Juwayriyya b. Mushir al-'Abdī. For more details see: *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ,* 6-7.

[106] He is another close associate of 'Alī to whom he foretold the circumstances of his death. 'Alī nicknamed him Rushayd the Forecaster, because he had taught him the art of forecasting fates. Rushayd was in the habit of telling people how they would die, and his forecasts did indeed come to pass. For more details about him see: *Rijāl al-Kashshī,* 75-78, n.º 131; *Rijāl al-Barqī,* 4, 8; *Rijāl al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī,* 63, n.º 556-1; 94, n.º 931-1; 100, n.º 978-1; and 114, n.º 1122-3.

[107] A resident of Kūfa of Arabian origins, who fought with 'Alī at the battles of the Camel and Ṣiffīn. For more details see: *Rijāl al-Barqī,* 5; *Rijāl al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī,* 193; *Rijāl al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī,* 59, n.º 499-4.

[108] The manuscript is mentioned in the introduction to 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Muqarram's book, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* Beirut, 1979, 17.

[109] For details on him see: *ibidem,* 8-21.

[110] He is a little-known contemporary Shī'ite playwright, a native of Iraq and currently living in Denmark.

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Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī and His Role in Shīʿī Thought in the Second Century AH

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Abstract

This article introduces an important Shīʿite figure, who played a role in the evolution of early Shīʿism in the second century AH and has until now been neglected by scholars, who have preferred to focus on others.
In the present study we examine Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī's contribution to early Shīʿite thought and doctrine. We analyse his work, his warm relations with the imams Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim, and how al-Jawalīqī as a result enriched Shīʿite thought in a number of domains in the second century AH.

Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī, a prominent Shīʿite figure in the second century AH, founded a school of theology and Islamic jurisprudence to which historians have given the name Jawāliqiyya. He was a student of the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE) and the seventh, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799 CE). He participated in the discussions and discourses they held and advised them on various issues. He is considered one of the composers of the "four-hundred foundations".[1]

[1] Also called "the four-hundred books", which contain teachings taken directly from the imams themselves, or quoted from their companions, who heard them from the imams. The "four-hundred books" were composed by four-hundred Shīʿite writers in the second century AH, by companions of the two imams Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Most of the books contain ancient Shīʿite traditions attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. Many of these books appear to have been extant until quite recently. The traditions which they relate deal with Quranic exegesis, *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence and the religious doctrine of early Shīʿism. Shīʿite scholars invested a great deal of effort in their study, preservation and correction. Today only a few of these books are still in existence, among them books by the fifth-century scholars al-Shaykh

Biographical details

Name

Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqīʾ al-Kūfī, companion of the two Twelver imams al-Ṣādiq and his son al-Kāẓim, both of whom appear in traditions which he transmitted.[3]

According to al-Maqrīzī in his *Khiṭaṭ* his surname was al-Jawāliqī;[4] al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) states that it was al-Jawālīqī or al-Jaqwāliqī.[5] The form al-Jawālīqī is found in numerous Shīʿite sources.[6]

His epithets (kunya) were Abū Muḥammad[7] and Abū al-Ḥakam.[8]

al-Mufīd (d. 413 AH), al-Najāshī (d. 450 AH), al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH). According to al-Ḥillī (d. 676 AH) the "four-hundred books" contain answers that the imam al-Ṣādiq gave to questions he was asked in his lifetime, answers which were related by the imam's son, the imam al-Kāẓim, his companions and contemporaries. A necessary condition for a book's inclusion in this collection is thus that the sayings it contains were actually heard by someone in the iman's presence. Al-Ṭahrānī in his *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa* mentions 124 of the four-hundred books by title and author's name. The following is a sample of ten names among the many authors mentioned in Shīʿite sources:

1. Abān b. Thaʿlab.
2. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd b. ʿUthmān al-Qurashī.
3. Isḥāq b. Jarīr al-Bajalī al-Kūfī.
4. Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī.
5. Ḥumayd b. Ziyād al-Naynawī.
6. Saʿīd al-Aʿraj.
7. Hishām b. al-Ḥakam.
8. Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī.
9. Wahb b. ʿAbd Rabbihi al-Asadī.
10. Ādam b. al-Ḥusayn al-Najjāshī.

There are many additional names, including some who wrote more than one of the four-hundred books.

Of the four-hundred, only four are now extant; for Twelver Shīʿism these are today the basic sources of Shīʿite *ḥadīth*. These four are (s.v. "The Four Books") al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*, Ibn Bābawayhi al-Qummī's *Man lā yaḥḍiruhu al-faqīd*, and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's *al-Istibṣār* and *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*. For more details see Kohlberg, Etan, "Al-usul al-arbaʾumiʾa", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10, (1987), 128-166.

[2] The word is derived from *juwāliq*, a food vessel; see: Riḍā, 1958, 1:607.

[3] Al-Barqī 1963, p.35; al-Kashshī 1929, p.281, *ḥadīth* no. 501; al-Najāshī no date, p. 434 *ḥadīth* no. 1165; al-Ghaḍāʾirī, Ibn Dāwūd 1963, p. 368 *ḥadīth* no. 1645; al-Ḥillī, 1963, p. 179 *ḥadīth* no. 2; al-Barūjardī 1989, 2:575; al-Nawbakhtī, 1984, 78; al-Ḥurr al-ʿāmilī 1989, 8:278 *ḥadīth* no. 10653 ch 12.

[4] Al-Maqrīzī 1970, 2:384.

[5] al-Ṭùsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* p. 318 no. 4749.

[6] Al-Nuʿmānī, 1976, 1:163 *ḥadīth* no. 163; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* 7:267 *ḥadīth no.* 76 ch 24; al-Ḥurr al-ʿàmilī 1989, 21:45 *ḥadīth* no. 26491 ch 18; al-Mufīd 1992.a, 1:314; al-Ṣaffār 1984, 1:194, ch 7 *ḥadīth* no. 2; al-Majlisī 1984, 26:94 ch 3 *ḥadīth* no. 27.

[7] al-Ṭùsī no date, 318; al-Barqī 1963, 49.

[8] Al-Najāshī no date, 434 *ḥadīth* no. 1165; Ibn Dāwūd 1963, 368 *ḥadīth* no. 1645; al-Ḥillī 1963, p.179 *ḥadīth* no. 2; Ibn Shahrāshūb no date, 129 *ḥadīth* no. 863 (margin).

Origin

All sources agree that he was a mawlā (client). Al-Barqī (d. 274/887 or 280/893), al-Kishshī (a scholar of the second century AH), al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) and others state that "Hishām b. Sālim was a client of Bishr b. Marwān, a captive of al-Jawzān".[9]

The Bishr mentioned in these sources is Bishr b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam al-Umawī (d. 75/694), who governed al-Kūfa in the name of his brother, the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, in the first year of the latter's caliphate. Then al-Baṣra was added to his jurisdiction. His rule over the two cities, however, lasted only a few months.[10]

The territory of al-Jawzān[11] was conecquered in the year 33/653. Al-Ṭūsī, however, is of the opinion that Hishām's full name was Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī al-Juʿafī, and his master was a Kūfan;[12] in other words, that he was the client of the tribe of Juʿfa, which belongs to the Yemeni tribal group of Qaḥṭān.

We are thus faced with a contradiction with respect to Hishām's origins: according to some he was a client of Bishr b. Marwān al-Umawī and stemmed from al-Jawzān, while according to others he was a client of the Juʿfa tribe.

The truth of the matter would appear to be that it was Hishām's father, not Hishām himself, who was taken prisoner on the day when al-Jawzān was conquered. After all, it is highly unlikely that Hishām himself would have been alive both when al-Jawzān was conquered in 33/653 and after the death of the imam al-Ṣādiq in 148/765. In addition, Sālim, the name of Hishām's father, is an Arab name which in those days was frequenly given to slaves. For these reasons it is likely that it was the father who was captured.

The origin ascribed to Hishām m by al-Ṭūsī, namely that he was a client of the Juʿfa tribe, can also be explained as referring to Hishām's father, who was captured by members of the Qaḥṭānī Yemeni tribe of Juʿfa. This is not as far-fetched as it may sound, for even the great collector of ḥadīth, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, author of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* wrote about his own family's origins: "Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Juʿafī,

[9] Al-Barqī 1963, 25; al-Najāshī, no date, p. 434 *ḥadīth* no. 434; al-Kashshī 1929, p. 281 *ḥadīth* no. 501, 2; Ibn Dāwūd 1963, p. 368 *ḥadīth* no. 1645; al-Khūʾī 1992, 20:324-325; al-Barūjardī 1989, 2:575; al-Mufīd 1992 b, 1:52; al-Majlisī 1984, 10:296.

[10] Kalīfa 1993, 209.

[11] Al-Jawzān, also called Jawzjānān, is the name of a district in the rural region of Balkh in Khurāsān, between al-Rūz and Balkh. It was conquered by al-Aqraʿ b. Ḥābis al-Tamīmī in 33/653. See: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī 1979, 2:182_183.

[12] Al-Ṭūsī no date, 318.

so called because his grandfather converted to Islam under al-Yamān al-Juʿafī, governor of Bukhāra, whose clients he and his children were"[13].

Whatever the truth of the matter, certainly Hishām's later allegiance to Bishr, who had bought him, annulled his former allegiance which he had inherited from his father. This is perhaps the reason why most biographers ignored his former annulled allegiance and only mentioned the later one.[14]

To conclude this discussion, Hishām originated in al-Jawzān, where his father was captured when that province was conquered by al-Aqraʿ b. Ḥāsib.[15] This means that he was not a Muslim, and that later Bishr b. Marwān al-Umawī bought Hishām, who thus became his client. However, we do not know when Bishr bought him or how old Hishām was that time.

His birth and childhood: Our sources say nothing of Hishām's birth and childhood, except that he was a Kūfan and, as mentioned above, a client of Bishr b. Marwān al-Umawī. This at least allows us to surmise that he was born before his master's death, which occurred in 75/694.

Maternal nephew: According to some sources, Hishām had a maternal cousin by the name of al-Ḥasan b. Ḥāzim al-Kalbī, who transmitted some traditions in the name of his maternal uncle Hishām.[16]

His father: The only information we possess about Hishām's father is the fact that Hishām himself narrated a tradition whose chain of transmission consists of his father, Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī and ʿAlī b. Abū Ṭālib. No other information exists about any member of Hāshim's family.

His occupation: His name indicates that he was a maker of containers (jawālīq).[17]

Subsequently Hishām appears to have changed his occupation. The ḥadīth collector al-Barqī states that Hishām was a jawālīqī at first and then became an ʿallāf (seller of fodder).[18]

His connections to the imams and to the Umayyad regime

If, as some sources claim, Hishām was a client of Bishr b. Marwān, who died in 75/694, then he was a contemporary of four Twelver imams,

[13] Al-Ḥusaynī 1978, 111

[14] Al-Jaʿfarī 1992, 205-206.

[15] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī 1979, 2:182.

[16] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, p. 303, *ḥadīth* no. 594. He has no extant biography, with the exception of a mention by al-Tafarrushī (d. 1100/1688), who states that he was the son of Hishām b. Sālim's sister. see: al-Tafarrushī 1949, 5:251.

[17] Al-Kashshī 1929, p. 281 *ḥadīth* no. 501.

[18] On Hishām's change of occupation see: al-Barqī 1963, 35; al-Kashshī 1929, p. 281 *ḥadīth* no. 501.

ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 94/712), Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir (d. 114/732), Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), and the latter's son, Mūsā b. Jaʿfar al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799). Interestingly enough, the first imam in whose name Hishām transmitted anything was Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. He did not transmit anything in the name of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn or his son al-Bāqir, despite the fact that he was their contemporary for nearly 50 years, since, as we pointed out above, he must have been born before 75/694, the year of his master Bishr's death, while al-Bāqir died in 114/732. We conclude that Hishām for a considerable part of his life had no connection to the imams. In fact, he only transmitted a single tradition concerning each of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn's and al-Báqir, one about Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn's and al-Bāqir love for grapes,[19] and the other about al-Bāqir's death.[20]

The imam in whose name Hishām narrated the most was al-Ṣādiq, who apparently was the first with whom he was directly associated.

If this is the case, then perhaps Hishām b. Sālim is the same person as the Hishām b. al-Ḥakam about whom it is related that he was converted by al-Ṣādiq, who convinced him to abandon his deterministic beliefs. But according to these traditions Hishām b. al-Ḥakam became associated with al-Ṣādiq at an age when his beard had not yet turned graey, while Hishām b. Sālim, as we saw above, was not close to the two imams who preceded al-Ṣādiq. It is therefore possible that the person mentioned in the traditions about penitence through the imam al-Ṣādiq is Hishām b. Sālim rather than Hishām b. al-Ḥakam.

Furthermore, a text which appears in a number of sources would seem to indicate that Hishām b. Sālim worked for the ruling regime, which can explain why the imam al-Bāqir was reported to have been circumspect about the answer he gave to to question from Zurāra about whether it was legitimate to work for the government. The report is as follows: "One day Hishām approached the imam al-Bāqir's companion Zurāra and asked him to ask the imam whether it was permitted to work for the authorities. The imam answered: There is nothing wrong with that. Then he added: Yet Zurāra wanted to report to Hishām that I forbid working for the authorities.".[21]

We learn from this that Zurāra would have liked to make such a report about the imam to Hāshim, but the imam foiled the attempt.

However, it would appear that Hishām was not completely disconnected from the imams and their companions, since he did report on Zayn

[19] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, p. 208 *ḥadīth* no. 352.
[20] *Ibid*. p. 118 *ḥadīth* no. 119.
[21] For more details on the issue of working for the regime see: al-Ṣádiq 2002, p. 229-265.

al-ʿĀbidīn's love for grapes[22] and on al-Bāqir's death.[23]This indicates that Hishām had some connection to the imams al-Bāqir and Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, although he did not report anything in their name or adhere to their ideology.

On the other hand, Hāshim certainly transmitted reports in the name of the sixth imam al-Ṣādiq and his son al-Kāẓim.

This fact becomes very clear with even the most superficial perusal of Hishām b. Sālim's *Musnad*. In one such text al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said to Hishām on the occasion of a debate between the latter and a man from Damascus: "You want a tradition about the Prophet but you do not know it."[24]

According to a number of sources after the death of al-Ṣādiq Hishām and some of his companions at first supported ʿAbd Allāh b. Jaʿfar al-Afṭaḥ, but after Hishām realised that ʿAbd Allāh lacked the qualifications for the post of imam, he transferred his support to al-Kāẓim and became one of his adherents.[25] He also tried to convince others to abandon al-Afṭaḥ, who responded by sending some people to assault him.[26]

In the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (ruled 774-785 CE) Hishām b. Sālim apparently had followers, named the jawālīqiyya, whom the caliph outlawed.[27]

The same tradition also states that the imam al-Kāẓim asked the "second of the two Hāshims"[28] to remain silent as long as his name was not mentioned among the groups which were supervised by the authorities. As the imam put it, "today the matter is harsh", since during al-Mahdī's reign as caliph anyone suspected of atheism or heresy was liable to be killed or tortured. The imam thus asked Ibn al-Ḥakam to hold his tongue so he would not be killed.

His death: We do not know the year of Hishām's death or its cause. In all likelihood he died during the imamate of Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799), since he transmitted reports in his name and convinced people to withdraw their support from his brother ʿAbd Allāh al-Afṭaḥ.[29]

[22] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, p. 208 *ḥadīth* no. *352*.
[23] *Ibid*. p. 118 *ḥadīth* no. 119.
[24] *Ibid*. p. 120 *ḥadīth* no. 127.
[25] *Ibid*. pp. 120-125 *ḥadīth* nos. 129-133.
[26] *Ibid*. pp. 140-142 no. 178.
[27] Al-Kashshī 1929, 1:266.
[28] "The two Hishāms" are Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī. "The second of the two Hishāms" is Hishām b. al-Ḥakam.
[29] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, p. 125 *ḥadīth* no. 133.

His writings

Hishām did not leave many written works, in contrast to his contemporary Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, who left more than 30 compositions. According to al-Najāshī, Hishām b. Sālim composed a *Kitāb al-ḥajj*, mentioned by Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, and also wrote a *Kitāb al-tafsīr* and a *Kitāb al-miʿrāj*.[30]

Al-Musnad (Musnad Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī)

The scholar Khaḍr Nabhā collected all the traditions reported by Hishām about the imams, which he found in about 65 different Shīʿite sources, and sorted them into chapters in the same way as the authors of the four canonical ḥadīth collections did.[31] Al-Musnad is divided into four parts: Faith, ethics, law, and Quranic exegesis.

From the text of the traditions reported in al-Musnad we learn that Hishām b. Sālim had some 65 shaykhs whose words he transmitted:

> Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799), Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī (d. 150/767), Abū ʿUbayda al-Ḥaddāʾ (d. before 148/765), al-Aḥwal (d. 168/784 or 169/785), Zurāra b. Aʿyan (d. 150/767), Saʿd al-Iskāf al-Khaffāf (was alive before 148/765), Shihāb b. ʿAbd Rabbihi (was alive around 150/767), ʿUmar b. Yazīd (d. after 148/765), al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār (d. before 148/765), Abū ʿUmar al-Kinānī (d. 240/854), Abū Maryam al-Anṣārī (d. before 160/776), Abū Ayyūb al-Khazzāz (lived until after 149/765), Abū Baṣīr al-Murādī (was alive before 148/765), Ibn Abī Yaʿfūr (d. 131/748), Ibn Muskān (d. before 183/799), Abān b. ʿUthmān (d. before 183/799), Abān b. Taghlib (d. 141/758), Ismāʿīl al-Juʿafī (was alive after 148/765), Burayd b. Muʿāwiya (150/767 or earlier), Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿafī (d. 127/744), al-Ḥusayn al-Aḥmasī (was alive around 150/767), al-Ḥārith b. al-Mughīra (was alive after 148/765), Ḥusayn b. Ḥammād (was alive before 148/765), Ḥamza b. Ḥumrān (was alive before 148/765), Zayd al-Shaḥḥām (was alive after 148/765), Ziyād b. Sūqa (….), Samāʿa b. Mihrān (was alive after 148/765), Sawra b. Kulayb (was alive before 148/765), Sulaymān b. Khālid (d. before 148/765), Sālim, Hishām's father, Ṣafwān al-Jammāl (was alive after 170/786), ʿUqba b. Khālid (was alive before 148/765), ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. ʿAwwāḍ (d. after 170/786), ʿUmar b. Ḥanẓala (was alive after 148/765), ʿAbd al-Malik b. Aʿyun (d. before 148/765), ʿAmmār al-Sābāṭī (was alive before 183/799), ʿAmmār b. Marwān (was alive before 183/799), ʿAjlān Abū Ṣāliḥ (d. before 148/765), Muḥammad b. Ḥumrān (…..), al-Muʿallā b. Khunays (d. 133/750),

[30] Al-Najāshī no date, p. 434 *ḥadīth* no. 1165.

[31] The title *al-musnad* among Shīʿites is restricted to books which contain traditions told by one of the 14 "infallibles" (the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve imams). The name of the specific person with whom a work deals may be added to the title: *Musnad amīr al-muʾminīn* (*Musnad of the Commander of the Faithful*), *Musnad al-Riḍā*, and so on.

Mālik b. Aʿyun (d. before 148/765), Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Ṭāʾifī (b. 80/699, d. 150/767), Muḥammad b. Qays (d. 151/768), al-Walīd b. Ṣabyaḥ (…..), Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Baqbāq (was alive after 148/765), Abū al-Ward (…..), Abū Khālid al-Kābulī, Abū ʿUmar al-Aʿjamī, Abū Isḥāq al-Hamadānī, Abū Usāma, Jahm b. Ḥumayd, Ḥabīb al-Sijistānī, Ḥakam b. Ḥakīm al-Ṣayrafī, al-Ḥasan b. Zurāra, al-Ḥusayn b. Zurāra, al-Ḥusayn b. Yaḥyā, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, Salama b. Muḥriz, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Abī al-ʿAlāʾ, Muḥammad b. Muḍārib, Muḥammad b. Marwān, Yazīd al-Kunāsī.[32]

His students in the transmission of traditions

By this title I mean all those who report sayings of the imams in Hishām's name, as far as I was able to ascertain from the sources available to me. I was able to count a total of 47 names. These "students", known as the *jawāliqiyya*, were the following:

Ibn Abī ʿUmayr (d. 217/832), al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (d. 224/838), ʿAlī b. al-Ḥakam (was alive before 220/835), ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (…..), al-Naḍr b. Suwayd (was alive before 183/799), Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 208/832), Yūnus (…..), Abū Yaḥyā al-Wāsiṭī (was alive in 254/868), Ibn Maḥbūb (149/766 – 224/838), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr al-Bazanṭī (d. 221/835), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā (was alive in 274/887), Bashīr al-Dahhān (was alive before 183/799), one Jamīl, who can be identified either as Jamīl b. Darrāj (d. after 183/799) or Jamīl b. Ṣāliḥ (was alive before 183/799), Jaʿfar b. Bashīr al-Washshāʾ (d. 208/823), al-Ḥusayn b. Sayf b. ʿAmīra (…..), Ziyād b. Marwān al-Qandī (was alive after 183/799), Sulaymān b. Jaʿfar (was alive after 183/799), Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā (d. 210/825), ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Faḍl (was alive after 148/765), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Najrān (was alive before 220/835), ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Aṣamm (…..), ʿAbd Allāh b. Jundab (died c. 200/815), al-Qāsim b. ʿUrwa (…..), Muḥammad b. Sinān (d. 220/835), Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Bazīʿ (d. before 220/835), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (was alive in 255/868), Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥamza al-Thumālī (was alive before 183/799), Manṣūr b. Ḥāzim (was alive after 148/765), al-Haytham b. Abī Masrūq (…..), Abū Usāma, Abū al-Qāsim al-Iyādī, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Wāsiṭī, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Qāsim (al-Ḥaḍramī), ʿAlī b. Ḥātim al-Minqarī, Muḥammad b. al-Rabīʿ al-Aqraʿ, Mundhir b. Ḥafṣ, Mundhir b. Jayfar.[33]

Hishām b. Sālim and the Shīʿite imams

Hishām maintaind a close relationship with the two imams al-Ṣādiq and al-Kāẓim. This relationship, which affected Hishām's outlook and which

[32] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, pp. 17 ff.
[33] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, pp. 38 ff.

was mentioned above in general terms, will now be discussed in greater detail, with a focus on the following themes:

A. Hishām's reports in the imams' names.
B. The imams' influence on Hishām.
C. What the imams were told about Hishām and how they defended him.

A. Hishām's reports about and in the name of the imams

Even a superficial perusal of Hishām's *al-Musnad* and a quick examination of other Twelver Shī'ite sources reveals numerous reports about the imams which he transmits. This is especially true with respect to the two imams Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and his son Mūsā al-Kāẓim. The reports, which concern matters of doctrine, jurisprudence, ethics and exegesis, provide evidence for the close connection between Hishām and the imams. Below we shall deal with them under three different headings:

1. Hishām's reports about the two imams on matters of faith;
2. Reports about the two imams on exegesis and jurisprudence;
3. Reports about the two imams on ethics.

a) Hishām's reports about the two imams, al-Ṣādiq and al-Kāẓim, on matters of faith

In the present paper we can only give a general outline of the topics of the traditions and reports in question. Anyone interested in the detailed contents may look at the original texts in *al-Musnad* and in the other sources mentioned below.

The traditions transmitted by Hishām about the two imams on matters of doctrine and faith reflect the arguments of unbelievers or things which Hishām himself heard, and demonstrate that the debate and discourse in the society in question concerned even the most specific details. The imams, especially al-Ṣādiq, show themselves to be vigorous defenders of the faith.

The reports on matters of monotheistic faith may be divided into the following topics:

i) ***Existence and attributes***: Hishām reports the imams' opinions on the essence of the deity, on His invisibility, His knowledge, power and will, and His attributes of being the All-hearing and All-seeing.

Hishām reports in al-Ṣādiq's name the proof for the existence of God called the "abolition of the predestined and refutation of intentions".

ii) **Prophets and imams**: Hishām quotes many utterances by the two imams on the prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, Solomon, Lot, Job, David, Zachariah, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad and his Companions. He also quotes utterances about the imams and their companions, the instructions which the Prophet gave to ʿAlī b. Abū Ṭālib, miracles performed by the imams al-Ṣādiq, al-Kāẓim and ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, the occulation of the Mahdī, and numerous reports on the imams' companions.

We note that Hāshim does not speak about any other imams except those mentioned above. He only alludes to the occultation of the twelfth imam, al Mahdī (disappeared in 874 CE). He stresses the fact that there must always exist an imam in every generation.[34]

iii) ***Human fa*te**: Hishām reports a number of utterances in al-Ṣādiq's name on fate and choice, ability and Badā'[35].

b) Hishām's reports on the two imams' utterances concerning Quranic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence

i) *On exegesis*: Hishām reports 168 interpretations of Quranic verses by the two imams, all of which are listed in *al-Musnad.*

ii) On jurisprudence: The compilers of Shīʿite ḥadīth collections such as al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣadūq, al-Ṭūsī and others included Hishām's reports on the two imams' statements on this subject in 23 books with various titles:

1. *Kitāb al-ṭahāra* (Book of ritual purity): Contains seven reports by Hāshim b. Sālim.
2. *Kitāb al-janā'iz* (Book of funerals): Contains 10 reports by Hāshim b. Sālim, all quoting the imam al-Ṣādiq, with the exception of one which he reports in the name of Abū Ḥamza who quotes the imam ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, and another in the name of Ḥabīb al-Sijistānī who quotes the imam al-Bāqir.
3. *Kitāb al-ṣalāt* (Book of prayer): Here 66 reports by Hishām all quote the imam al-Ṣadiq, with the exception of five: two reported by Muḥammad b. Muslim in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, one reported by Ḥabīb al-Sijistānī in the name of the imam ʿAlī b. al-

[34] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, p. 139 *ḥadīth* no. 174; p. 140 *ḥadīth* no. 177; p. 142 *ḥadīth* no. 179; pp. 143-144 *ḥadīth* nos. 182, 183.

[35] *Badā*' meaning: revealing after concealing" or " alteration in the divine will" is a Shīʿa concept regarding God. It refers to God revealing His true will about a decision. wherein the people thought His will had already been made clear on that issue. The Shīʿa do not believe that God had no knowledge of the ultimate outcome.

For detail see: Ayoub 1986, pp. 623-632.

Ḥusayn, and two reported by Zurāra in the name of the imam al-Bāqir.

4. *Kitāb al-zakāt* (Book of alms): Here Hishām quotes twelve statements in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq, with the exception of two, which Muḥammad b. Muslim and Abū Baṣīr report in the name of the imam al-Bāqir.
5. *Kitāb al-ṣiyām* (Book of fasts): In this book Hishām mentions fourteen reports all quoting the imam al-Ṣādiq, with the exception of three which quote the imam al-Bāqir, one transmitted through Saʿd b. Ṭarīf, another by Muḥammad b. Muslim, and a third by Abū Baṣīr.
6. *Kitāb al-ḥajj* (Book of pilgrimage): Here Hishām b. Sālim reports thirty-three quotes by the imama al-Ṣādiq.
7. *Kitāb al-nikāḥ* (Book of matrimony): Forty-three reports by Hishām b. Sālim are quoted here, thirty-six in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq and six in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, transmitted by al-Ḥasan b. Zurāra, Barīd al-Majlī, Abū Baṣīr, Muḥammad b. Muslim, ʿAmmār b. Mūsā al-Sābāṭī and others.
8. *Kitāb al-dawāb* (Book of beasts): This book contains two traditions transmitted by Hishām in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
9. *Kitāb al-waṣāyā* (Book of testaments): Here Hishām b. Sālim reports five traditions in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
10. Kitāb al-qaḍā' wal-aḥkām (Book of judgments and verdicts): Four reports in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
11. *Kitāb al-īmān* wal-nudhūr wal-kaffārāt (Book of faith, vows and penance): In this book Hishām relates three traditions in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
12. *Kitāb al-maʿīsha* (Book of livelihood): Hishām b. Sālim reports 30 traditions in this book, all in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq with the exception of five in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, two as related by Abū Baṣīr and three by Muḥammad b. Muslim, Abū ʿUbayda and Abū Khālid al-Kābulī.
13. *Kitāb al-ḥayḍ* (Book of menstruation): Here he relates a single tradition quoting the imam al-Ṣādiq.
14. *Kitāb al-jihād* (Book of jihad): In this book he reports four traditions in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
15. *Kitāb al-ṭalāq* (Book of divorce): Contains five traditions related by Hāshim in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
16. *Kitāb al-ʿitq* wal-tadbīr wal-kitāba (Book of manumission, management and writing): Here he reports nine traditions, all in the name

of the imam al-Ṣādiq, with the exception of one tradition in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, transmitted by Abū al-Ward.

17. *Kitāb al-ṣayd* (Book of the hunt): Here there are five traditions in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
18. *Kitāb al-dhabāʾiḥ* (Book of animal sacrifice): In this book Hishām b. Sālim relates a single tradition in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
19. Kitāb al-mawārīth (Book of inheritance): Here Hāshim reports 13 traditions in all, two in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, transmitted by Yazīd al-Kunāsī and ʿAbd Allāh b. Aʿyan or Mālik b. Aʿyan, and the others in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
20. *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* (Book of penalties): Here there are two traditions quoting the imam al-Bāqir, one transmitted by Barīd al-ʿAjlī and the other by Abū Baṣīr, as well as 17 traditions in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
21. *Kitāb al-diyāt* (Book of blood money): In this book there are 14 traditions in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, one in the name of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, and eleven in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
22. *Kitāb al-shahādāt* (Book of testimony): Here there are seven traditions, all in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
23. *Kitāb al-rawḍa* (Book of the garden): This book contains 10 traditions, all in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq, with the exception of one in the name of the imam al-Bāqir.

c) Hāshim's reports on the statements made by the imams Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim on social propriety

These traditions are listed in the second part of *al-Musnad*, divided into the following books:

1. Kitāb al-īmān wal-kufr (Book of faith and unbelief): In this book Hishām b. Sālim reports 88 traditions in all, one in the name of the imam al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, transmitted by al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Ḥallāl in the name of his grandfather, two in the name of the imam ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, transmitted by Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, nine in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, transmitted by Ḥabīb al-Sijistānī, Abū Bāṣīr and Abū ʿUbayda al-Ḥadhdhāʾ, and the rest in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
2. Kitāb al-duʿāʾ (Book of invocation): This contains four traditions in the name of the imam al-Bāqir, one in the name of the imam al-Kāẓim, and 19 in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.

3. Kitāb al-ʿishra (Book of intimate relations): Contains one tradition in the name of the imam al-Bāqir and four in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
4. Kitāb al-ʿaqīqa (Book of the sacrifice on occasion of birth): Contains a single tradition in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
5. Kitāb al-aṭʿima (Book of foods): Here Hishām b. Sālim reports 30 traditions, all in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq, with the exception of one in the name of the imam al-Bāqir.
6. Kitāb al-ashriba (Book of drinks): Contains three traditions, all in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.
7. Kitāb al-zayy wal-tajammul wal-murūʾa (Book of garments, adornment and chivalry): Contains six traditions, one in the name of the imam al-Bāqir and five in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.

B. The imams' influence on Hishām

Hishām was greatly influenced by the two imams al-Ṣādiq and al-Kāẓim, especially the former. The beginnings of their influence on him can be traced to his attendance at the audiences which they gave, some of whose contents he reports. Thus, for example, he tells of a group of women who came to the imam al-Ṣādiq and asked him about lesbian love, and about Muʿāwiya b. Wahb and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Aʿyan who came to him and asked him about the tradition according to which the Prophet saw God.[36]Hishām also reports what the same imam said to Ḥumrān,[37] and tells of a man who came to the imam and asked him about knowledge of God.[38]Much of what he relates concerns matters of Islamic jurisprudence and doctrine which he heard from the imam; he introduces such matters with the formula: "He was asked in my presence"[39] or "I heard him say".[40] It would appear that Hishām also attended the audiences of the imam al-Kāẓim; he relates that Khaṭṭāb al-Aʿwar asked Abū Ibrāhīm, i.e. the imam al-Kāẓim, about the inheritance of missing persons.[41] Interestingly enough, Hishām also reported the same matter as transmitted by Ḥafṣ al-Aʿwar, but this time in the name of the imam al-Ṣādiq.[42]

[36] Al-Jawālīqī 2007, p. 67 no. 9.
[37] *Ibid*., p. 342 *ḥadīth* no. 674.
[38] *Ibid*., p. 69 *ḥadīth* no. 12.
[39] *Ibid*., p. 293 *ḥadīth* no. 579.
[40] See, for example, *ibid*., p. 154 *ḥadīth* no. 200; p. 161 *ḥadīth* no. 218; p. 195 *ḥadīth* no. 319; p. 196 *ḥadīth* no. 321; p. 198 *ḥadīth* no. 330.
[41] *Ibid*., p. 309-310 *ḥadīth* no. 605.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 310 *ḥadīth* no. 609.

It is thus not surprising that Hishām declares his adherence to the imam al-Ṣādiq.[43]

The second source of influence on Hishām came from his own questions to the imams on various topics. He mentions, for example, that he asked the imam al-Ṣādiq about God's rights over His creation,[44] about Jacob's grief over Joseph,[45] whether al-Ḥasan was superior to al-Ḥusayn,[46] the occulted imam and the signs of his return,[47] about Yūnus b. Ẓabyān,[48] the ḥadīth of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb,[49] the curses leveled at the imam ʿAlī,[50] about what people say,[51] and about many issues of jurisprudence, court rulings and proper behavior.[52]

C. What the Imams Were Told About Hishām and How They Defended Him

In the wake of these questions the imams became Hishām's sources of support in times of helplessness and weakness. This is the third characteristic in the relationship between Hishām and the imams. Hishām relates that when he would disagree with Zurāra on some issue he would look to the imam al-Ṣādiq for solace,[53] and the same happened whenever he disagreed with any of his companions on matters of religious jurisprudence.[54] Once Hishām came to the imam al-Ṣādiq to ask him about the rules for prayer as applied to young boys, because his rivals disputed with him on this issue.[55]

Hishām relates that once he asked Mūsā b. Bukayr to ask the imam al-Kāẓim in his name about a certain doctrinal issue which bothered him, namely whether unbelief or polytheism were older.[56]

[43] *Ibid*., p. 124 *ḥadīth* no. 131.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 66 *ḥadīth* no. 6.
[45] *Ibid*., p. 88 *ḥadīth* no. 53.
[46] *Ibid*., p. 116 *ḥadīth* no. 114.
[47] *Ibid*., p. 126 *ḥadīth* no. 136.
[48] *Ibid*., p. 136 *ḥadīth* no. 167.
[49] *Ibid*., p. 137 *ḥadīth* no. 169.
[50] *Ibid*., p. 145 *ḥadīth* no. 184.
[51] *Ibid*., p. 147 *ḥadīth* no. 190.
[52] See, for example, *ibid*., p. 160 *ḥadīth* no. 216; p. 194 *ḥadīth* no. 314; p. 205 *ḥadīth* no. 344; p. 208 *ḥadīth* no. 353; p. 226 *ḥadīth* no. 385; p. 230 *ḥadīth* no. 399; p. 237 *ḥadīth* no. 419; p. 242 *ḥadīth* no. 443; p. 245 *ḥadīth* no. 453; p. 256 *ḥadīth* no. 482; p. 257 *ḥadīth* no. 484; p. 264 *ḥadīth* no. 499; p. 256 *ḥadīth* no. 502; p. 266 *ḥadīth* no. 506; p. 267 *ḥadīth* no. 509; p. 276 *ḥadīth* no. 528; p. 282 *ḥadīth* no. 543; p. 286 *ḥadīth* no. 559; p. 289 *ḥadīth* no. 570; p. 292 *ḥadīth* no. 576; p. 293 *ḥadīth* no. 578; p. 311 *ḥadīth* no. 610; p. 317 *ḥadīth* no. 610; p. 317 *ḥadīth* no. 624; p. 318 *ḥadīth* no. 627.
[53] *Ibid*., p. 132 *ḥadīth* no. 156.
[54] *Ibid*., p. 237 *ḥadīth* no. 419.
[55] *Ibid*., p. 226 *ḥadīth* no. 385.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 167 *ḥadīth* no. 240.

This explains Hishām's declaration that he adhered to the imams,[57] and that thanks to the teachings which he received from the imam al-Ṣādiq no one was more devout in believing in one God than he.[58]

A number of texts show that the imam al-Ṣādiq apparently considered Hishām b. al-Ḥakam a stronger debater than Hishām b. Sālim, and expressed his appreciation of the former.[59] In a debate between a man from Damascus and the two Hāshims the imam praised Hishām b. al-Ḥakam in the following words: "If only everyone spoke like you." while of Hishām b. Sālim he said: "He wants tradition but does not know it."[60]

Thus when the imam al-Kāẓim wanted to rebut the arguments of the determinists, he asked Hishām b. Sālim to tell Hishām b. al-Ḥakam to write an epistle on this subject for him.[61]

The imams taught both Hishāms. We find, for example, that one day the imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq asked Hishām b. Sālim about God, and after Hishām responded the imam informed him of the correct answer.[62]

We deduce from the above that Hishām was present at the imams' audiences and discussions on matters of faith and jurisprudence, that he looked to them for answers to his questions, and that the imams taught him how to argue and debate.

But despite his position, the imams companions quoted him as having said unseemly things; the imams, however, refused to believe these claims.

Sayings supposedly by Hishām which were reported to the imams

Numerous texts testify to the fact that the imams al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) and his son al-Riḍā (d. 203/818) were told derogatory things about Hishām. One tradition, for example, states that Hishām said that his Lord has the figure of a fortunate youth,[63] or just a youth.[64] In another tradition he is claimed to have said, that God made him, and that Adam was created in the image of God.[65] In yet another tradition the imam al-Ridā is reported to have been shocked by such a claim by Hishām.[66]

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 124 *ḥadīth* no. 131.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 69 *ḥadīth* no. 11.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 90 *ḥadīth* no. 56.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 66 *ḥadīth* no. 6.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 69 *ḥadīth* no. 11.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 70 *ḥadīth* no. 16; p. 311 *ḥadīth* no. 609.
[63] Al-Kulaynī 1945, 1:105-106; al-Ṣadūq 1977, 97-99; 1983, 277; Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1949, 1:66; al-Majlisī 1984, 3:288.
[64] Al-Qummī 1983, 1:20.
[65] Al-Kashshī 1929, 284.
[66] Al-Kulaynī 1945, 1:105; al-Ṣadūq 1977, 97; 1983, 277; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1949, 1:66.

In our opinion these reports are not very trustworthy, since they originate with fanatic Shīʿite circles and Muʿtazlites, who cooperated in the dissemination of slanders against both Hishām b. Sālim and Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, who together constituted a philosophical and juridical school known among historians of Islamic sects as the Hishāmiyya.

Conclusion

In the present study we saw that Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī was a companion of the two imams Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and his son al-Kāẓim. Hishām, whose family originated in al-Jawzān, was born in al-Kūfa before 694 CE, and was a transmitter of Twelver Shīʿite traditions in the second century AH.

He had followers, called al-Jawālīqiyya, in the age of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (758-775 CE), and died during the imamate of Mūsā al-Kāẓim (799 CE). He is the author of three books, studied with 65 shaykhs and taught 47 students. His thinking was influenced by his close relations with the imams al-Ṣādiq and al-Kāẓim, in whose name he transmitted utterances on Qur'ānic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence, dealing with matters of ritual purity, burial, prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage, matrimony, domestic animals, testaments, the courts, faith, vows and expiations, livelihood, menstruation, holy war, divorce, manumission, the hunt, animal sacrifices, inheritance, legal punishments, blood money, testimony, and gardens.

In addition, Hishām transmitted traditions in the name of the same two imams on faith and unbelief, invocations, disobedient wives, foods and drinks, garments and adornment, and chivalry.

In short, Hishām played a not inconsiderable role in the doctrinal development of Twelver Shīʿism in the second century AH.

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Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays: The Man and His Role in Early Shīʿite History

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Abstract

*The purpose of the present study is to survey the life and deeds of an important Shīʿite personality, al-Muʿallā b. Khunays, a companion of the Sixth Imām (in Twelver Shīʿism), Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, one who has not, as far as we are aware, had any scholarly work devoted to him until now. In this study we analyze the role of Al-Muʿallā in the propagation of early Shīʿite thought through an examination of his life, his close relations with Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, and the enrichment of Shīʿite philosophy and jurisprudence in a number of domains as a result of these relations.**

A biographical sketch of Al-Muʿallā bin Khunays

Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays (agnomen Abū ʿAbd Allāh) was born in the vicinity of the Iraqi city of Al-Kūfa[1] (and is thus referred to by the attribute Al-Kūfī). His precise year of birth is not known. According to available literary sources about his years in Al-Kūfa he began his life as a client of the Banū ʾAsad[2] and worked as a draper.

Al-Muʿallā was an enthusiastic supporter of the cause of the descendants of the Imām ʿAlī (*Ahl al-bayt*). He devoted most of his life to propagating

* I am indebted to Professor George Kanazi for his helpful comments on this article.

[1] On Al-Kūfa, see Djait, 1986.

[2] On the Banū Asad, see Kindermann, 1986.

the Shiʿite cause and lived in close proximity to the Imāms of his time. At first he attached himself to the *mughīriyya*[3] sect, led by Al-Mughīra b. Saʿīd al-ʿIjlī[4] (d. 737 CE) and later to Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥasan, known as "The Pure Soul"[5] (*al-nafs al-zakiyya*) (d. 762 CE). We do not know when he left the latter in order to join the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq[6] in Al-Madīna,[7] where he became one of his most ardent followers and remained at the Imām's side until his was killed in the year 133/750 CE. This latter period, spent in the Imām's vicinity, was the most important in his life. Significant details of the role he played then have been preserved in various sources, as we shall show below.

Children

Al-Muʿallā was married. We do not know how many children he had. The names of two of his children are mentioned in historical sources: Bishr[8] and Sulaymān; in view of his cognomen, it is likely that he also had a child named ʿAbd Allāh.[9]

Family

Some members of his family are mentioned in "books of personalities" (*kutub al-rijāl*), among them a brother, Al-Ḥasan b. Khunays,[10] and a nephew or cousin, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. al-Daylam al-Ghanawī.[11] The latter was probably Al-Muʿallā's nephew rather than his cousin;[12] he had another cousin, named Sulaymān.[13]

Al-Muʿallā's status as a source of *ḥadīth*

It is a curious fact that although Al-Muʿallā was highly regarded by Al-Ṣādiq, who relied on him and trusted[14] him (see below), some "books of personalities" cast doubt on his reliability as a transmitter of traditions (*muḥaddith*),

[3] See Madelung, 1993.
[4] See Tucker, 1975.
[5] See Von Arendonk, 1960; Al-Zirkilī, 1986, 6:220.
[6] See Hodgson, 1986.
[7] On Al-Madīna, see Winder, 1986.
[8] Ibn Abū al-Ḥadīd, 1967, 18:55–56.
[9] Al-Ghaḍā'irī, 1944, 3:169.
[10] Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 304, no. 753.
[11] Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 245, no. 19.
[12] Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 24.
[13] Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 225, no. 4.
[14] Al-Ṭūsī, 1990, p. 347; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 259, no. 1.

describing traditions with his name as transmitter, as "very weak" and as "not to be depended upon".[15]

Al-Ḥillī, without going into details, claims that the reason for this lies in the fact that some extreme Shiʿite groups inserted many tendentious traditions in his name.[16] Some sources claim that Al-Muʿallā ascribed certain of his own sayings to Al-Ṣādiq because he was not himself of a well-known lineage. Thus Al-Kishshī informs us that people in Al-Madīna referred to him as "that Iraqi",[17] a term which connotes both scorn and condescension.

While Al-Muʿallā clearly played an important role in the career of the Imām Al-Ṣādiq, due to the circumstances of his times his actions were of necessity veiled in secrecy and performed with discretion. For this reason the sunnitel Muslim was usually not aware of the fact that he was either a devoted adherent of Al-Ṣādiq or that he transmitted traditions concerning that Imām. In fact, all that was usually known about him was that he was from Iraq and that he moved to Al-Madīna. This may explain why the traditions which he transmitted have been considered of doubtful authenticity. Nevertheless, whatever his status among Muslims in general as a transmitter of traditions, he was undoubtedly a unique figure among Shiʿite transmitters, one of many whose reports are quoted very frequently in the major books of Shiʿism.

Al-Muʿallā is quoted as transmitting various sayings of the Imām Al-Ṣādiq, including answers to questions of all kinds posed to him by Al-Muʿallā. However, there is no way to determine with certainty whether he actually did transmit every saying ascribed to Al-Ṣādiq in these traditions, or whether some or even many were spuriously ascribed to him at a later date.

Other personalities whose sayings Al-Muʿallā transmitted are: Abū Ṣāmit,[18] Al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar,[19] and Yūnis b. Ẓabyān.[20] Among those who transmitted in his name are: Isḥāq b. ʿAmmār Al-Ṣayrafī,[21] Jamīl b. Darrāj,[22]

[15] Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 417; Al-Ghaḍāʾirī, 1944, 3:169; Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 516, no. 490.

[16] Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 259, no. 1.

[17] Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 377, no. 707.

[18] See Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 326, no. 4883 – 24.

[19] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 518, no. 497; p. 549; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 34; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 321-329, no. 581–588.

[20] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, pp. 527–528, no. 548; pp. 550–551; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 30; Al-Ghaḍāʾirī, 1944, 6:284; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 323, no. 4829 – 46; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 363–365, nos. 672-575; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 266, no. 2; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 448, no. 1210.

[21] See Al-Barqī, 1964, pp. 28, 47; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 200, no. 1; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 72, no. 169.

[22] Ibn Dāwūd, p. 92, nos. 342, 358; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 41; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 334, no. 4964 – 4; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 34, no. 1; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 251–252, nos. 467–468; Al-Najāshī, 1986, pp. 126-127, no. 328.

Ḥarīz b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Sijistānī,[23] Abū Khadīja Sālim b. Mukarram al-Kūfī al-Jammāl,[24] Muʿallā Abū ʿUthmān,[25] ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Yaʿfūr,[26] Yaḥyā al-Ḥillī,[27] Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī[28] and others.

Al-Muʿallā the ascetic

It appears that Al-Muʿallā led a life of abstinence[29] and devoted himself to seclusion and prayer. On feast days he would go out into the desert disheveled, covered with dust, and give himself over to abject prayer, asking for God's forgiveness.[30]

Al-Muʿallā's standing with the Imām Al-Ṣādiq

Shiʿite sources agree that the Imām Al-Ṣādiq considered Al-Muʿallā a laudable person who followed in his footsteps. Al-Ṣādiq had a great many followers in his day, many of whom are mentioned in Shiʿite sources. However, it is not always possible to determine just where each of these lived and the precise degree of sincere devotion each felt toward the Imām. It would appear that he possessed an elementary method for maintaining contact with his followers. Here one problem facing modern scholars is that the Shiʿites were organized in a clandestine manner at the time, and also that there was not just one single organization, but rather a number of competing ones. To this we must add the fact that very many of those who transmitted sayings in the name of Al-Ṣādiq were far from being sympathetic to his cause. Indeed, some sources quote them as being among the Imām's companions whereas in fact many of them, although in favor of the cause of the house of ʿAlī, were not adherents of Shīʿism. It is therefore usu-

[23] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 102, no. 388; p. 438, no. 110; p. 543; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 63, no. 4; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 383–385, nos. 717–719; Al-Najāshī, 1986, pp. 144–145, no. 375.

[24] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, pp. 382, 390, 544, 546; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 33; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 217, no. 2878 – 116; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 227, no. 2; p. 271; Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 353, no. 661; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 188, no. 501.

[25] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, pl. 348, no. 1546; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 168, no. 1; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 417, no. 1115.

[26] See pp. 8-9 below.

[27] See Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 323, no. 4823 – 40; p. 346, no. 5166 – 10; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 182, no. 12; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 444, no. 1199.

[28] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 368, no. 1645; p. 384; Al-Barqī, 1964, pp. 34–48; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 179, no. 2; Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 218, no. 501; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 435, no. 1165.

[29] On asceticism see Goillot, 2002.

[30] Al-Nūrī, 1988, 6:146–147, no. 6660 – 1; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 381–382, no. 715.

[31] Lalani, 2004, p. 148.

ally quite difficult to differentiate between those who merely transmitted Al-Ṣādiq's sayings and those who were truly followers of his[31].

Among the pieces of evidence in historical sources for Al-Ṣādiq's warm feelings toward Al-Muʿallā are the following:

A. When Al-Muʿallā came in the company of Khālid b. ʿUqba to visit Al-Ṣādiq he gave both of them permission to enter. Then he greeted them and said to them: "You are the first hearts in God".
B. Al-Muʿallā accompanied Al-Ṣādiq on a clandestine visit to the tomb of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in Najaf. ʿAlī as we all know was killed by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muljam al-Murādī (d. 660 CE) in Kūfa and buried very late at night in order that the location of his grave not become publicly known. His family continued to keep the site a secret, known only among them selves. The main reason for keeping the burial and the grave site a secret would appear to have been the fact that ʿAlī himself had expressly made a request to that effect before he died. An additional factor may have been the fear lest his corpse be abused by his enemies, the *khawārij* and the Umayyad dynasty.
   According to this tradition Al-Ṣādiq knew the location of ʿAlī's tomb and went to visit it at night with just Al-Muʿallā as companion, in order to preserve the secret of the site's location from the general public. From this we can infer that Al-Muʿallā was in the confidence of Al-Ṣādiq, who trusted him to the point of revealing well-guarded secrets to him.
C. Al-Muʿallā accompanied Al-Ṣādiq when the latter distributed alms[32] to the needy.

Al-Ṣādiq renders legal opinions to Al-Muʿallā

In the times of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq religious strife became ever more vehement and brought about dissention and discord. People began to entertain doubts about various aspects of the belief in the Imāms and to raise many questions on issues of religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Shīʿites as we know reject the ancient schools of jurisprudence which are accepted by the rest of the Islāmic nation and instead consider the sayings of the Imāms of the House of ʿAlī as the true source of jurisprudence.

Shīʿism in the period in question was going through extraordinary times, and it is therefore only natural that the followers of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and of the Imāms who preceded him should have treated the Imāms' opinions with great respect and obeyed their religious rulings. This is the context in which Al-Muʿallā's sought Al-Ṣādiq's counsel on various religious matters, such as the interpretation of Qur'anic verses,[33] among others. Subsequently

[32] On alms in Islām see Weir 1995.

[33] See, for example, the Imām's commentary on Q 58:4 in Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 1:277, no. 4; or Q 50:28 in the following sources: Al-Nuʿmānī, 1976, p. 232, no. 16; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 13,

Al-Ṣādiq's rulings on Al-Muʿallā's questions became an inseparable part of Shīʿite dogma; they were written into the Shiʿite books on the theoretical foundations (*uṣūl*) and the practical application (*furūʿ*) of Islāmic jurisprudence and were considered legitimate sources for legal rulings.

Thus, for example, Al-Muʿallā sought Al-Ṣādiq's ruling on the interpretation of numerous Qur'anic verses, among them Q 58:4 and 50:28. Among the fundamental issues of jurisprudence on which he sought the Imām's advice we may mention questions concerning the Twelfth Imām,[34] duties of a believer[35] toward his fellows,[36] and many other matters which considerations of space prevent us from discussing.

As for matters of practical jurisprudence (*furūʿ*), Al-Muʿallā sought Al-Ṣādiq's rulings on numerous issues. We cannot of course discuss here all the traditions about rulings which Al-Ṣādiq gave Al-Muʿallā. Among the issues which these rulings address we may mention the following:

– Witnesses to a temporary marriage (*mutʿa*).[37]

– The *siwāk* (A piece of a branch or root of a tree that is used as a toothbrush; also called *miswāk*).[38]

An examination of extant traditions about juridical rulings of Al-Ṣādiq on questions brought before him by Al-Muʿallā reveals that the latter was more concerned with practical applications of the law (*furūʿ*) than with fundamental principles (*uṣūl*).

It is well-known, of course, that among Shīʿites the Imām is considered the source of sure guidance whenever a case comes up for which tradition has no answer, or the matter concerns a novel development which tradition could not know. Shīʿites would apply directly to their Imām in order to get a ruling on any question of religious jurisprudence, a solution which was

no. 1; p. 41, no. 15; Al-Qummī, 1983, 1:383; Ibn Bābawayh, no date, 1:210, no. 108; Al-Ḥusaynī, 1988, p. 413; Ibn Bābawayh, 1977, p. 351, no. 17.

[34] The Twelfth Imām is Muḥammad b. Al-Ḥasan (the Hidden Imām), known also by the agnomina *Al-Mahdī*, *Ḥujjat Allāh*, *Baqiyyat Allāḥ* and *Ṣāḥib al-zamān*. His cognomen is Abū al-Qāsim. For more on the Twelfth Imām see Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 174, no. 235; Ter Haar, 1993, 7:443.

[35] We should point out that the word "believer" (*muʾmin*) has in Shīʿite usage the meaning of "a believing Shīʿite", in contrast to the term Muslim, which is used to refer to Sunnis, who do not believe in the doctrine of the Shīʿite Imāmate. For more information on this issue see Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 2:27–28, nos. 1-2; Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 146, no. 43.

[36] Al-Mufīd, 1992a, p. 28; Al-Daylamī, 1987, p. 254; Al-Rāwindī, 1985, p. 226.

[37] Al-Ṭūsī, 1946, 7:261, no. 56; *ibid.*, 1970, 3:148, no. 2; Al-Nūrī, 1988, 14:469, no. 17324 – 2; Al-Ashʿarī, 1987, p. 84, no. 191.

[38] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 2:23, no. 6. For more details on the term *siwāk* see Rispler-Chaim, 1992, pp. 13–20.

no longer available after the Twelfth Imām disappeared. At any rate, we can infer from this that the Qur'ān and tradition are not sufficient by themselves and cannot be the sole sources of jurisprudence. A "true interpreter" is needed as well, and that is a function that can only be fulfilled by the Imām of the times.[39]

Miracles performed by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in the presence of Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays

Twelver Shīʿites believe that their Imām is capable of performing miracles,[40] in contrast to the Sunnis, who claim that miracles can only be performed by prophets. The motivation that lies behind this claim is the Shiʿite desire to affirm the Imām's status and his right to his position. The Imām Jaʿfar Al-Ṣādiq has had more miracles attributed to him than any other Imām. Thus Al-Majlisī (d. 1698 CE) in his *Biḥār al-anwār* recounts 227 traditions that relate miracles ascribed to him, a number which is surpassed by none, save ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib himself.[41] One should thus not wonder that some of these miracles were performed on or in the presence of Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays.

Two miracles of this kind are related in our sources.

The first miracle:[42]

It is related that Al-Muʿallā complained to Al-Ṣādiq that he missed his family, which he had left behind in Kūfa, and expressed his keen desire to see it again after he had heard that a plague had swept through Iraq. When he heard this Al-Ṣādiq miraculously caused Al-Muʿallā to go instantly from Al-Madīna to his family in Kūfa (hundreds of miles away). This Al-Ṣādiq did by telling Al-Muʿallā to face in the direction of Kūfa. He then rubbed his face[43] and immediately Al-Muʿallā found himself in his home in Kūfa,

[39] Lālānī, 2004, p. 166, fn. 20.

[40] On miracles in Shīʿite thought see, for example, Loebenstein, 2003, pp. 199-244; Momen, 1985, p. 23; Jafri, 1979, p. 294; Gramlich, 1987, p. 39; Gardet, 1978; Amir-Moezzi, 2000, pp. 251–286; Kohlberg, 2003, pp. 125-157.

[41] Compare this number, for example, with the chapter on the miracles of the Imām Al-Bāqir (Vol. 46) in which 89 traditions are related, taking up 35 pages; the Imām Al-Qāẓim (Vol. 48), with 106 traditions taking up 71 pages; the Imām Al-ʿAskarī (Vol. 50) with 81 traditions taking up 58 pages. For more details see Amir-Moezzi, 2000, pp. 259-260.

[42] For more detail on this miracle see Al-Nūrī, 1988, 12:297, no. 14132 – 3 and, based on him, also Al-Majlisī, 1984, 2:71; Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, pp. 136, 138; Al-Qummī, 1984, p. 403; Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 378; Al-Baḥrānī, 1992, 5:228-233, nos. 1591/21 – 1596/26; Al-Mufīd, 1992b, p. 323; Al-Ṣaqqār, 1983, p. 406; Al-Ṭabarī, 1963.

[43] Passing the hand over the face of a person involved or present was very frequently used by Shiʿite Imāms when performing a miracle. Of course, this was not a measure invented by

surrounded by his family. He stayed there for a short time until he saw that they were all well. He had intercourse with his wife and then Al-Ṣādiq returned him to Al-Madīna at the same speed as when he had sent him there.

In this miracle Al-Ṣādiq is described as being able to see where Al-Muʿallā's house in far-away Kūfa was located, and to have him travel a great distance in an instant.

The second miracle:[44]

One time Al-Muʿallā came to Al-Ṣādiq. Al-Ṣādiq saw that he was crying and asked him why. He answered that there were some people at the gate who claimed that the Prophet's family (*āl al-bayt*) did not possess any special merit and did not differ from everyone else. Thereupon Al-Ṣādiq was silent. Then he ordered a plate of dates to be brought to him. From it he took one date, which he split into two. He ate the fruit and planted the seed in the ground. It sprouted and brought forth unripe dates. He took one, split it in two, ate it, and brought out of it a piece of parchment which he handed to Al-Muʿallā and told him to read it. On it was written: "In the name of Allāh the kind the merciful; there is no God but Allāh, Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāḥ, ʿAlī, Al-Ḥasan, Al-Ḥusayn, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn", and so on, listing all the (names of the twelve Imāms) until Ḥasan b. ʿAlī and his son (the hidden Imām).

In this miracle Al-Ṣādiq demonstrates to Al-Muʿallā that he is able to see things which ordinary mortals cannot. The Imām performs this miracle in his presence in order to demonstrate that he is indeed a legitimate Imām and that he is a worker of miracles like the other Imāms of the Prophet's family, who are all superior to other men.

The relationship between ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Yaʿfūr and Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq lived in Al-Madīna, where he had a number of followers, while others lived in Mecca, Basra, Kūfa and Damascus. According to our sources Kūfa in particular was a city in which many adherents of the Imām lived. We cannot of course discuss every one of the Imām's supporters who achieved renown and contributed to advancing the cause of the Imāmate.

them; in fact, it was quite commonly encountered in many places before the advent of Islam. See Kohlberg, 2003, pp. 150–151; Lefébure, 1905, p. 207; Fahd, 1968, p. 27; Goldziher, 1906, p. 327.

[44] Al-Rāwandī, 1986, 2:624–625.

Nor will space allow us to mention every tradition on the matter, or even only those of evident value and interest. We shall instead limit ourselves to examining a number of traditions which will enable us to shed light on a number of people who were probably on intimate terms with the Imām.

Among his more important followers was a certain ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Yaʿfūr al-ʿAbdī,[45] who was also close to Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays. ʿAbd Allāh was a reader of the Qurʾān in the mosque of Kūfa and a very close associate of the Imām. He is frequently cited as the source of traditions concerning Al-Ṣādiq and is considered a reliable and trustworthy transmitter. According to some sources he was a disciple of this Imām, and before that of his father, the Imām Al-Bāqir. ʿAbd Allāh died in the Imām's lifetime. The Imām attended his funeral and is reported to have said this about him: "Nowhere have I found anyone so heedful and obedient to me as ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Yaʿfūr".

ʿAbd Allāh and Al-Muʿallā were contemporaries and probably close friends. They may even have known each other in Kūfa. More than once they worked together to disseminate the Shīʿite creed on the orders of Al-Ṣādiq. On one of these occasions they had a dispute about certain matters of faith, and asked Al-Ṣādiq to adjudicate between them. Among the issues they disagreed on were the status of the "legatees" (*awṣiyā*')[46] or Imāms and whether it was permitted to each the slaughtered meat of Jews and Christians.[47] It turned out that in every such case the position taken by ʿAbd Allāh was the correct one.

The death of Al-Muʿallā

The Abbasid Caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr[48] (d. 775 CE) was informed by a man of the tribe of Quraysh[49] that Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq had sent his associate Al-Muʿallā to collect money from members of the Shʿite community, with the assistance of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh.[50] Upon hearing this the Caliph became furious and wrote to his uncle Dāwūd b. ʿAlī[51] (d. 750 CE), who

[45] See Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 246-247; Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 197, no. 817; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 230, no. 3106 – 15; p. 264, no. 3776 – 685; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 107, no. 25; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 213, no. 556.

[46] For more on the concept of "legatee" (*waṣī*) see Kohlberg, 1960, pp. 161–162.

[47] Al-Nūrī, 1988, 16:146-147, no. 19423 – 4; Al-Mufīd, 1992c, pp. 30-31.

[48] See Kennedy, 1991.

[49] See Montgomery, 1986.

[50] See Buhl, 1993.

[51] See Al-Ziriklī, 1986, 2:333.

was governor of Al-Madīna at the time, commanding him to send Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq forthwith to Baghdad. The governor duly told the Imām that he was to present himself to the Caliph. Al-Ṣādiq, accompanied by Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl,[52] came to Baghdad and presented himself to the Caliph, who interrogated him as to the activities in which Al-Muʿallā was engaged on the Imām's behalf. Al-Ṣādiq denied the accusations against him, and so the Caliph ordered the man who had reported the matter to him to be brought into his presence in order to confront the Imām. When the man came Al-Ṣādiq asked him to swear to the truth of his allegations in his presence. As soon as the man swore he fell down and died. The frightened Caliph immediately released the Imām and invited him to stay on at the court as his honored guest. But the Imām preferred to go back to Al-Madīna.[53]

At the same time Al-Manṣūr ordered his uncle, governor of Al-Madīna, to keep track of Al-Muʿallā's activities and to put him under arrest. Al-Muʿallā was duly put in prison. The governor wanted to execute him, but the prisoner asked him to be allowed go out before being executed since he had many debts which he wanted to repay. The governor, Dāwūd b. ʿAlī, acceded to his request. So Al-Muʿallā went out to the market of Al-Madīna, and when a crowd had gathered around him he said: "My friends, I am Muʿallā b. Khunays, and those of you who know me know who I am. I want you to bear witness that I hereby bequeath all my possessions, whether material objects, debts, slaves or houses, be it much or little, to Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq".[54]

After this the governor had him beheaded and crucified, because of his missionary work for the Shīʿite cause and his ties with Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.[55]

From this tradition we may infer that Al-Muʿallā was quite wealthy. Perhaps he had acquired his wealth while living in Kūfa. We also learn from this tradition that he was in charge of collecting the fifth-tax. What is of importance in the present context is that he was a wealthy man and that he bequeathed this wealth to the Imām for the purpose of furthering the Shiʿite cause, a sure sign of his devotion to both the cause and its leader.

The record shows that Dāwūd b. ʿAlī proceeded to expropriate Al-Muʿallā's property after his execution, whereupon Al-Ṣādiq put a curse on him. As

[52] See Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 45; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 197, no. 525; Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 188, no. 769; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 90, no. 2; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 227, no. 3064 – 42.

[53] Ibn Ṭāwūs, 1990, pp. 198–201; Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 6:446, no. 3; Al-Nūrī, 1988, 16:71–63, no. 19189 – 2.

[54] Al-Kishshī, 1929, p. 377.

[55] Al-Ṭūsī, 1990, p. 347.

a result of the curse God sent an angel who smote the governor on his head with an iron bar and killed him on the spot.[56] According to another tradition his bladder burst and he died.[57] Still another tradition just reports that he died, without indicating the immediate cause.[58]

Other sources claim that Al-Muʿallā was sentenced to death on a charge of having promoted the cause of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya b. al-Ḥasan, also known as "The Pure Soul" (*al-nafs al-zakiyya*). This is in fact highly unlikely to have been the case, for two reasons:

A. There are just too many reports about Al-Muʿallā's exclusive devotion to the Imām Al-Ṣādiq.
B. The major events involving Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, the spread of his doctrine, the imprisonment of his adherents, his appearance and death, all occurred during the reign of the Caliph Al-Manṣūr (754-775 CE), whereas Al-Muʿallā was executed in the year 750 CE, at the beginning of the reign of the Caliph Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ,[59] at a time when the cause of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh was certainly not perceived as being such a threat that he had to be interrogated, and then executed, with his companions. True, Al-Saffāḥ did often ask about him, but only in passing.

The reason Al-Ṣādiq gave for Al-Muʿallā's death

According to Shiʿite sources Al-Ṣādiq received the news of Al-Muʿallā's death after he returned from Mecca from Al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar,[60] who entered into his presence and said: "Oh son of the messenger of God, have you not noticed the momentous event which has befallen the Shīʿites today?". The Imām asked him: "What is it?", to which Al-Mufaḍḍal replied: "Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays has been executed". Al-Ṣādiq commented on this as follows: "May God have mercy on Al-Muʿallā. I was expecting this because he had made our secret public, and anyone who does that is doomed to depart from this world by the bite of a weapon or die insane".[61] According to this story, then, Al-Muʿallā revealed some secrets of the Imāms, and for this reason had to die.

[56] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 2:513, no. 5; 2:557, no. 5; Al-ʿĀmilī, 1989, 7:132, no. 8927; Al-Nūrī, 1988, 5:258-259, no. 5820 – 1; Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, 4:230; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 283, no. 2.

[57] Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 114.

[58] Al-Irbillī, 1961, 2:169; Al-Kafʿamī, 1984, p. 205.

[59] For more details about Al-Saffāḥ see Moscati, 1986, 1:103.

[60] See Al-Ghaḍāʾirī, 1944, 6:131; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 34; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 321–329, nos. 851–859; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 416, no. 1112.

[61] Al-Nūrī, 1988, 12:300, no. 14139 – 30. According to another tradition he disobeyed Al-Ṣādiq and therefore merited the sword; for details see Al-Mufīd, 1992, pp. 321-322; Al-Ṣaffār, 1983, p. 403.

Thereupon Al-Ṣādiq was filled with rage and in a spontaneous reaction ran immediately out of the house, trailing the bottom of his coat. Together with his son Ismāʿīl[62] he went to Dāwūd b. ʿAlī, the governor of Al-Madīna, in order to find out if indeed the report was true, and to punish the governor if had really executed Al-Muʿallā. When he arrived he said to Dāwūd: "You killed my associate and took my property". Dāwūd answered: "It was not I who killed him and I did not take your property".[63]

According to a third tradition about his death, Ismāʿīl b. Jābir[64] was with Al-Ṣādiq in the vicinity of Mecca. The Imām asked his companion to go to Marra or to ʿUsfān and to ask the people if anything of importance had happened in Al-Madīna. At Marra Ismāʿīl found no one, and he went on to ʿUsfān, where he saw a camel caravan carrying oil. When he asked there if anything had happened in Al-Madīna they said: "Nothing, except for the execution of that Iraqi called Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays. When Ismāʿīl returned to Al-Ṣādiq, the latter spoke to him before he could say a word: "Al-Muʿallā b. Khunays has been killed". Ismāʿīl answered: "Yes". To which the Imām replied: "By God, he has entered Paradise".[65] According to this tradition the Imām foresaw the death of Al-Muʿallā and knew that he would go to heaven.[66] This ability, to see what ordinary mortals cannot, and to know what happens at great distances, is a characteristic which Shiʿites attribute to all their Imāms.

To summarize the story of Al-Muʿallā's death, we saw three traditions, in all of which Al-Ṣādiq foretold the time and place of the event, expressed his consternation at his death, and announced that he would go to heaven. True, in the second tradition the Imām does not express his sadness at Al-Muʿallā's death; this may be due to considerations of prudence, what the Shiʿites call "dissimulation" (*taqiyya*) for, as we have mentioned above, Shiʿites at the time were forced to keep their organization secret.

Al-Muʿallā's death made a deep impression on Al-Ṣadiq, who in later times mentioned him a number of times and prayed for mercy on his soul.

[62] See Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 159, no. 1777 – 81.

[63] Al-Nūrī, 1988, 5:258, no. 582 -1; Al-Mufīd, 1992b, 2:184-185; Al-Ṭabarsī, no date, 1:276–277; Al-Fattāl, no date, 1:176; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 28; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 8, no. 2.

[64] See Al- Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 24, no. 1246 -18; p. 331, no. 1264 – 18; Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 56, no. 176; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 28; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 8, no. 2.

[65] Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 376-382, nos. 707-715. In another tradition he relates that Al-Ṣādiq announced: "I know that Al-Muʿallā will be killed by Dāwūd b. ʿAlī, that he will behead him and crucify him". See also Al-Rāwandī, 1989, 2:647; Al-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 118; Ibn Ṭāwūs, no date, pp. 230–231; Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959, 4:225.

[66] *Ibid.*, 18:226, no. 22579 – 1.

It is related, for example, that Al-Walīd b. Ṣabīḥ[67] came one day into the presence of the Imām and set out his clothes for him. Al-Ṣādiq asked him to fold them up again, which he then did. This reminded the Imām of Al-Muʿallā, and he said: "May God have mercy on Al-Muʿallā b, Khunays.[68]

Conclusion

In this paper we have described a close associate of the Imām Al-Ṣādiq, who left his family in Kūfa and went to live in Al-Madīna in order to promote the Shīʿite cause under the leadership of the Imām. Al-Muʿallā remained relatively unknown in the city of his residence, where he was referred to as "that Iraqi". Perhaps this was so because the dissemination of the Shīʿite creed could only proceed in secrecy in that period.

Many of Al-Ṣādiq's sayings and rulings on matters of law and doctrine have survived in the *ḥadīth* literature, and have remained part of accepted Shīʿite belief and practice to this day.

Al-Muʿallā accompanied his Imām on many occasions, to distribute alms, on a secret visit to the tomb of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and so forth. He witnessed two miracles performed by the Imām, but also found out some of his secrets, and may have revealed them to others, an action which displeased the Imām and led to Al-Muʿallā's death.

Al-Ṣādiq grieved at Al-Muʿallā's death and rebuked the governor of Al-Madīna for having executed him. After his death the Imām would mention him frequently and ask God to have mercy on his soul.

Taken together, what we know about Al-Muʿallā shows that he played a significant role in the life of the Imām Al-Ṣādiq's, and in the dissemination of the Shiʿite creed during this early period.

[67] See Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 362, no. 1620; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 41; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 316, no. 4706 – 1; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 177, no. 2; Al-Kishshī, 1929, pp. 319-320; Al-Najāshī, 1986, p. 431, no. 1161.

[68] Al-Kulaynī, 1946, 8:304, no. 469; Al-Barqī, 1964, p. 45; Al-Ḥillī, 1991, p. 73, no. 10; Ibn Dāwūd, 1964, p. 154, no. 609; Al-Ṭūsī, 1995, p. 204, no. 2617 – 22.

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KHALID SINDAWI

The Abbasid Vizier ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn (124-182/741-798) The Man and His Role in Early Šīʻite History

Political and Historical Background

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn lived in the 2nd/8th century and personally experienced the events of his age in Baghdad and al-Madīna. He was born in the reign of the tenth Umayyad caliph Hišām b. ʻAbd al-Malik, whose rule began in the year 105/723. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn lived for about three years under Umayyad rule; however, this period was a time of great popular opposition to and revenge against this dynasty. The Abbasids then seized power. The first Abbasid ruler was Abū al-ʻAbbās ʻAbdallāh al-Saffāḥ (ruled 750-754). He entered al-Kūfa as a governor in the year 132/749 and spent most of his time in power purging his state of the Umayyads and strengthening the foundations of the new regime. He did not persecute the adherents of ʻAlī, both because his regime was not yet strong enough, and because the Abbasids seized power supposedly in their name. Al-Saffāḥ died in 136/754. He was followed by his brother Abū Ǧaʻfar al-Manṣūr (ruled 754-775), who did persecute ʻAlī's followers. As a result ʻAlid rebellions against the Abbasids broke out. The first such rebellion was led by Muḥammad b. ʻAbdallāh b. al-Ḥasan (d. 762), known as He of the Pure Soul (*ḏū'l-nafs al-zakiyya*), who himself had aspirations on the caliphate after the Umayyad downfall, since the Hāšemites promised him their allegiance. He refused to recognize the Abbasid regime and did not swear allegiance either to al-Saffāḥ nor to his successor al-Manṣūr. When Abbasid persecution of the ʻAlids intensified he revolted against them and seized al-Madīna in the year 145/762. Al-Manṣūr sent a large army against him, consisting of two divisions, one commanded by ʻĪsā b. Mūsā and another commanded by Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭaba al-Ṭāʼī. The Abbasid army besieged al-Madīna, quelled the rebellion and killed its leaders. The residents of the city suffered greatly under the oppression of the Abbasid forces (al-Layṯī 1976: 138 ff.). This rebellion was followed by another in the same year (762) which broke out in al-Baṣra. This second rebellion, led by Ibrāhīm b. ʻAbdallāh

al-ʻAlawī, met the same fate as the first (*ibid*.: 147).

The Abbasids relentlessly pursued all ʻAlids and their adherents, even those who did not participate in the rebellion directly. The Abbasid authorities applied ever growing pressure on the sixth imam Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq, who was perceived as the moving spirit behind the people's rebelliousness. Šīʻite sources accuse the caliph al-Manṣūr of having ordered his governor in al-Madīna to end al-Ṣādiq's life unobtrusively; they claim that the governor poisoned some grapes which the imam then ate and died (148/765); however, this accusation remains unsubstantiated.[1] The imam al-Ṣādiq was followed by the twenty-year-old Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799). He led his congregation with care and wisdom until the death of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr in 158/774, after a reign which lasted for twenty-two years. He was succeeded by his son al-Mahdī (ruled 775-785), who began his reign with a general amnesty for all political prisoners. He also returned all the money which his father had confiscated to the rightful owners, including that which al-Manṣūr had seized from the imam al-Ṣādiq, which he gave to the latter's son Mūsā al-Kāẓim.

The caliph al-Mahdī was a wanton profligate who ruled for eleven years (774-785). He once had the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim arrested because he perceived the latter's great popularity as a threat. He had him taken from al-Madīna to his own capital Baghdad and put in prison. However, he released him after he had a vision in a dream,[2] treated him with respect and returned him to al-Madīna. Al-Mahdī was followed by his son Mūsā al-Hādī (ruled 785-786), a young man of twenty-five who was quite hostile to the Šīʻites (al-Layṯī 1976: 258 ff.). At the beginning of his reign he adopted a policy of repression against them, which provoked an ʻAlid uprising, led by al-Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī, the grandson of the imam al-Ḥasan, in the year 169/789, who was killed together with his companions in the Battle of Faḫḫ (786) near Mecca. Although the Abbasid authorities were aware of Mūsā al-Kāẓim's pro-revolutionary sympathies, they could find no hard evidence against him. For this reason the caliph al-Mahdī immediately accused the imam the moment he heard about the uprising and threatened to have him killed. Mūsā al-Hādī died not long

[1] al-Masʻūdī (1988: IV, 28). Abū Zahra (1993: 51), it should be noted, rejects the claim that the caliph al-Manṣūr poisoned the imam al-Ṣādiq. He states that al-Manṣūr took steps to stabilize his rule and suppress any opposition, but that in his meetings with the caliph he became convinced that the latter did not oppose him. In fact, al-Ṣādiq's death occurred after al-Manṣūr's position had become completely secure and he had no reason to fear any hostile action on the part of the ʻAlids, nor would he have wanted to revive ancient enmities. He also attacks Šīʻite claims that he had killed the imam. Donaldson (1933: 141) states that these Šīʻite accusations against al-Manṣūr originated in the Šīʻite doctrine, according to which all the imams with the exception of ʻAlī, al-Ḥasan and the Mahdī died by poison, in line with *ḥadīṯ*s that maintained that no imam would die a natural death.

[2] al-Mahdī in his dream saw ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who recited Kor. 47:22 to him: «Would ye perhaps, if ye had turned back, have done evil in the land and severed the bonds of kinship?» (al-Layṯī 1976: 229).

thereafter, in 170/786, about one year and two months after he came to power. He was followed by his brother Hārūn al-Rašīd (ruled 786-809), who pursued two different policies towards the ʻAlids and their followers, at first quite tolerant and then very repressive. He killed a number of ʻAlid leaders and members of the Prophet's family, among them ʻAbdallāh b. al-Ḥasan Abū ʻAlī, the son of the imam Zayn al-ʻĀbidīn, al-ʻAbbās b. Muḥammad b. ʻAbdallāh, Idrīs b. al-Ḥasan, Yaḥyā b. ʻAbdallāh, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʻAbdallāh, al-Ḥusayn b. ʻAbdallāh b. Ismāʻīl b. ʻAbdallāh b. Ǧaʻfar b. Abī Ṭālib, and Isḥāq b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd.

The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim faced great tribulations in that period. He spent much of his life in prison, was threatened with death many times, and was tortured as well. He was killed in the prison of al-Sindī b. Šāhak in the year 183/799. Al-Kāẓim's death in al-Sindī's prison was described by Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī (al-Iṣfahānī 1995: 503-4), who related that al-Sindī rolled him into a carpet and ordered a servant of his to sit on his face until he died (al-Qurašī 1993: II, 86); Hārūn al-Rašīd ordered him killed in this way so that people would not accuse him of the murder (al-Iṣfahānī 1995: 417).

After the imam's death the ʻAlids remained quiescent for the ten years which remained of Hārūn al-Rašīd's reign (he died in 193/808). During that period they abandoned their overt activities and began to operate clandestinely, adopting a policy of what they called *taqiyya*[3] «dissimulation» and *kitmān* «concealment». These were the circumstances under which ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn lived.

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Life[4]

Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī b. Mūsā b. Yaqṭīn, a client of the Banū Hāšim tribe, or according to some of the Banū Asad tribe, was born in al-Kūfa in the year 124/741, towards the end of the Umayyad period. His father Yaqṭīn was a supporter of the Abbasids and a prominent Šīʻite propagandist. The Umayyad caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad (127-132/744-750) sought to capture him and he therefore went into hiding and his wife and his two sons, ʻAlī and ʻUbayd, fled to al-Madīna. When the Umayyads fell from power and the Abbasid state was established, Yaqṭīn came out of hiding and his wife returned with their children to al-Kūfa. Yaqṭīn joined the Abbasid caliph Abū al-ʻAbbās al-Saffāḥ (750-754), and he remained also with his brother Abū Ǧaʻfar al-Manṣūr (754-775). He was a Šīʻite and a supporter of the imamate, as his son ʻAlī,

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[3] *Taqiyya* is a practice in Šīʻa Islam whereby an adherent may conceal their faith when said adherent feels that they are under threat, persecution or compulsion. For more on *taqiyya* see Kohlberg (1975); Meyer (1980).

[4] For more information on his life see: al-Barqī (1963: 48); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 273, no. 715); al-Ḥillī (1990: XXXIX, no. 4); al-Mufīd (1992: 247-48); Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 253, no. 1079); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 340, no. 5056-17; s.d.*b*: 90-91, no. 378).

who was already active in the days of the sixth imam Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765) and transmitted traditions about and in the name of the imam 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 818). 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn died in Baghdad during the imamate of al-Kāẓim in the year 182/798 at the age of nearly fifty-seven, and was buried in Baghdad. He had two children. One, al-Ḥasan (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*a*: 354, no. 5246-7; al-Ḥillī 1990: 39, no. 4), was a transmitter, jurist and theologian, who transmitted traditions in the name of the father of the two imams Mūsā al-Kāẓim and 'Alī al-Riḍā (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*a*: 355, no. 5259-20; Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1963: 115, nos. 440-41; al-Barqī 1963: 51; al-Ḥillī 1990: 49, no. 3). The other, al-Ḥusayn, was a companion of Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Riḍā. He wrote a book entitled *Masā'il Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā 'alayhi al-salām* («Issues of Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā peace be upon him»; al-Naǧāšī s.d.: 45, no. 91; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 48, no. 155). 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn had two grandsons, one from each son. Al-Ḥasan's son, al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan (Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1963: 493, no. 385; al-Ḥillī 1990: 248, no. 7), cognomen Abū Muḥammad, lived in Qumm. Al-Ḥusayn's son was called al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn (Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1963: 540). He also had three brothers: Ya'qūb (al-Kulaynī s.d.: III, 340, no. 14; 379, no. 4), al-Ḥusayn (*ibid.*: III, 518, no. 5; IV, 451, no. 1) and Ayyūb (*ibid.*: IV, 160, no. 2). Šī'ite *ḥadīṯ* collections quote a number of traditions in their name.

His Master

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's master in faith was Abū Muḥammad Yūnus b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, a very prominent Šī'ite born in the reign of the caliph Hišām b. 'Abd al-Malik (724-743). He met the sixth imam Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa; no traditions have been transmitted in his name. The imam 'Alī al-Riḍā publicly praised his knowledge and legal opinions. The imam gave him a great sum of money as a religious endowment and never reproached him. He was said to have one of four men who were the last with knowledge of prophecy, namely Salmān al-Fārisī, Ǧābir b. 'Abd Allāh, Sayyid and Yūnus b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān.[5] When people came to the imam al-Riḍā and asked him who would instruct them in the features of their faith he would refer them to Yūnus b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Šī'ite tradition also relates that when he presented his book *'Amal al-yawm wa'l-layla* («Work of Day and Night») to the imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 873) the latter said that God would give the author a light for each letter on the Day of Resurrection. Yūnus b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān composed more than thirty books, including Ǧāmi' al-Āṯār, *Kitāb al-šarā'i'*, *Kitāb al-'ilal*, *Iḫtilāf al-ḥadīṯ*, *Masā'il 'an Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ǧa'far 'alayhi al-salām* and others. The traditions which he quotes in his

[5] Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 381, no. 17081; 528, no. 550); al-Barqī (1963: 49, 54); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 346, no. 1567-11; 369, no. 4578-2); al-Ḥillī (1990: 184, no. 1); al-Kaššī (1929: 284, no. 503, 483 ff.); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 446-47, no. 1208).

books are considered reliable and authoritative (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 181, no. 789).

His Companions

Šī'ite sources mention that 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn had a number of companions, the most prominent among whom was Nağiyya b. al-Ḥāriṯ (al-Ḥillī 1990: 176, no. 2; al-Kaššī 1929: 452, no. 852). He also had a muezzin, whose cognomen was Abū Muḥammad (al-Kaššī 1929: 145-46, no. 231; 215, no. 384). It seems that before he became a vizier for Hārūn al-Rašīd he was a modest spice merchant (al-Ḥillī 1990: 91, no. 3; al-Kaššī 1929: 430, no. 805).

His External Appearance

We know very few details about his appearance, except that he had two locks of hair (al-Kaššī 1929: 433, no. 812). The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim compared him to the Prophet's companions. On one occasion the imam said to some of his companions when 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn approached «Whoever would gladly see one of the Prophet's companions, let him look at this approaching man». One of those who were present said: «He must then be one who will go to Paradise», to which the imam replied: «Indeed I can testify that he will go to Paradise» (*ibid.*: 431, no. 810).

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's Writings

In addition to the many traditions which he transmitted, he also left three books, which are no longer extant. Only their names are still known today (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 91, no. 378; al-Naǧāšī s.d.: 273, no. 715; al-Māmaqānī 1930: II, 315):

A. *Masā'il 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn 'an al-imām al-Ṣādiq min al-malāḥim*. The book's title «On Battles Reported by 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn in the Name of the Imam al-Ṣādiq» would seem to indicate that it dealt with prophecies made by al-Ṣādiq concerning future strife, in answer to questions posed to him.
B. *Munāẓara li'l-šākk bi-ḥaḍrat al-imām al-Ṣādiq* «Disputation of a Doubter in the Presence of the Imam al-Ṣādiq», as its name shows, apparently contained a debate between the imam and an unknown doubter.
C. *Masā'il 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn 'an Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ǧa'far*. The title of this book «Topics which 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn took from Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ǧa'far» indicates that it dealt with subjects that 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn had learned from the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. The number of compositions which 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn is known to have written is quite modest in

comparison with other students of the imam al-Riḍā. The reason for this may perhaps be found in his political preoccupations, which took up most of his time. Šī'ite sources indicate that al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Nu'mān al-'Ukburī, d. 413/1022) mentioned 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's books. It is also related that the latter's son al-Ḥusayn passed on his books to his brother al-Ḥasan, who then transmitted them to Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, who transmitted them to Aḥmad b. Idrīs, who transmitted them to Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, to al-Ḥimyarī, to Sa'd b. 'Abdallāh, and to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 91, no. 378).

The Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim Performs a Miracle for Hārūn in the Presence of 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn

According to Twelver Šī'ism the imam is a miracle worker,[6] in contrast to the Sunnī creed, which believes that only prophets are capable of performing miracles. In fact, performing miracles is only one of the special powers possessed by imams according to Šī'ite belief. Such traits are used by Šī'ites to argue for the legitimacy of their imams and to strengthen their claims that imams are on a par with prophets. The imam Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq is said to have performed more miracles than any other. Al-Maǧlisī (d. 1698) in his *Biḥār al-anwār* quotes 227 accounts of miracles ascribed to him, a number which is exceeded only by the miracles of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, for example, is mentioned as a worker of miracles in only 106 traditions.[7] It is therefore not to be wondered that an imam was reported to have performed a miracle for Hārūn al-Rašīd and his companions in the presence of 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn. Šī'ite sources relate a miracle performed by the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim that was witnessed by 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn, who also reported it, as follows: the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd summoned his chamberlain Ḥumayd b. Mihrān, a sorcerer, in order to make light of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. When the table was set Ḥumayd b. Mihrān cast a spell over the bread, and when the imam al-Kāẓim's servant tried to take a piece of bread it flew out of his hands. This occasioned much amusement and Hārūn al-Rašīd broke out in laughter. The imam al-Kāẓim then raised his head in the direction of a picture of a lion that was painted on one of the curtains and spoke to it: «O lion of God, take the enemy of God», whereupon the picture was transformed into a real lion, which leaped out of the picture and devoured the sorcerer Ḥumayd b. Mihrān. Hārūn

[6] On the miracles wrought by Šī'ite imams see: Loebenstein (2003); Momen (1985: 23); Jafri (1979: 294); Gramlich (1987: IV, 615-16); Amir-Moezzi (2000); Kohlberg (2003).

[7] For example, in al-Maǧlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār* there are 89 traditions which relate miracles performed by the fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732) and 81 traditions about the miracles of the imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 873). For more details see: Amir-Moezzi (2000: 259-60).

al-Rašīd and his companions fell to the ground in a faint, in terror of what they had seen. When they recovered Hārūn al-Rašīd asked Mūsā al-Kāẓim to bring back the man whom the lion had devoured, and the imam pleaded for his return (Ibn Šahrāšūb 1959: IV, 299; Sindawi 2007). The account of this miracle shows that Šīʿites believe that their imam has the power to turn an inanimate picture into a living animal in the presence of others, in order to prove to them that as a legitimate imam he possessed super-human powers, not only to create a living lion out of a picture, but also to command the lion to devour anyone who dared ridicule him.[8] The act by which the imam turned the picture of the lion into a real animal consisted of raising his head towards the picture and addressing it as follows: «O lion of God, take the enemy of God», whereupon the lion immediately leaped out of the picture and did as he was ordered. The imam's call was thus answered immediately and the lion did his bidding forthwith. The act of devouring is depicted as violent and fear-inspiring, perhaps as a Šīʿite warning to its enemies not to mock its imams. It would thus seem that this type of miracle serves as a kind of compensation whereby the imams were able to take vengeance on their enemies who had deprived them of their rights and prevented them from becoming the leaders of the Muslim state. God, according to this view, compensated them by giving them spiritual powers which they were able to utilize in times of trouble.

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn and the Poet Abū al-ʿAtāhiya

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn is reported to have had a close relationship with poets and poetry, perhaps as a stratagem for hiding his true interest, namely to further the Šīʿite cause using his position as vizier. In the biography of the Abbasid poet Abū al-ʿAtāhiya (Ismāʿīl b. al-Qāsim, d. 826) ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn is mentioned as a friend of the poet. Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was known for his impudence and for his adherence to the Abbasid state. ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn always showed kindness to him and regard for his circumstances and every year gave him a generous gift, but one year he was late with the gift. Still, whenever Abū al-ʿAtāhiya met him or came to him he showed his joy and praised him. It is related that once ʿAlī met Abū al-ʿAtāhiya as the latter was about to go to the caliph's house. He stopped him and Abū al-ʿAtāhiya recited the following poem for him:

> Until when, o Ibn Yaqṭīn, will I wait for something which you have not brought?
> Greetings and a friendly smile in a man of your standing do not satisfy me
> This is the time in which men demand from me the haughtiness of kings and the morals of the poor

[8] Note that in the Hebrew Bible there are a number of cases in which a lion is reported to have punished someone who did not believe in God; Šīʿites may well have been influenced by such tales. For more details see: Kaplan (1981: 124, 180); *Kings* 13: 1-32, 20: 35-43, 2: 23-24.

Do you not know that God will compensate you and increase your grace, o Ibn Yaqṭīn?
Save me with your gift in this world, not on the Day of Judgment.

The moment Abū al-ʻAtāhiya finished reciting these verses ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn said to him: «I refuse to allow either of us to leave this place until you are satisfied», and ordered that he be given what he used to send him every year. This was brought immediately, and Ibn Yaqṭīn remained standing there until he received it (al-Amīn 1960: VIII, 41, 371; Abū al-ʻAtāhiyya 2003: 418, no. 528). In my opinion ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was fully familiar with Abū al-ʻAtāhiya's reputation as an impudent poet, and yet maintained an overt friendship with him and brought him an annual gift in order to draw attention away from his political activities and hide his Šīʻite connections.

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Pro-Šīʻite Leanings

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was pro-Šīʻite. As a vizier to two caliphs, al-Hādī (ruled 785-786) and Hārūn al-Rašīd (ruled 786-809) he helped the Šīʻites financially and spiritually. It is related that Hārūn al-Rašīd himself gave an order that ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn should personally see to the collection of taxes from the Šīʻites and the supporters of the Prophet's family. ʻAlī secretly asked the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799) for advice on this matter. The imam proposed to him that he return the money to its Šīʻite owners. And indeed, he would collect taxes from the Šīʻites quite openly, and then return it to them clandestinely, without Hārūn al-Rašīd's knowledge. In addition, ʻAlī provided the Šīʻites, and especially the imam al-Kāẓim, with vital information about the regime, its strength, its ability to face up to challenges, and about its plans to purge its Šīʻite opponents.

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was thus of considerable importance to the Šīʻites at the time. One example for his valuable assistance concerns the events of the Battle of Faḫḫ (786),[9] an uprising in which the ʻAlid forces lost. After this defeat the Abbasid caliph Mūsā al-Hādī threatened the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He even planned to travel to al-Madīna and unearth the graves of four imams, al-Ḥasan. ʻAlī (d. 661), ʻAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 713), Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 733) and Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), in the cemetery of Baqīʻ al-Ġarqad in al-Madīna, and to exhume their mortal remains. He threatened to kill Mūsā al-Kāẓim and accused him of having been behind the uprising. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn immediately sent this information to the imam, who took the needed precautions. He went on pilgrimage to his grandfather's grave and there recited the

[9] The Battle of Faḫḫ took place in 786 near al-Madīna, between the Abbasid army under the caliphate of Mūsā al-Hādī, and the forces of al-Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī, a son of the second imam al-Ḥasan. Al-Ḥusayn himself and those with him were killed, and many of the battle's participants were captured and led to Baghdad, where the caliph ordered them executed. For more details see al-Layṯī (1976: 276-78).

call of «Ǧawšan al-Ṣaġīr»[10] repeatedly, performed the supererogatory rites, and a few days later the unexpected happened, when the caliph al-Hādī was killed at the hand of his own mother (al-Mağlisī 1984: XLVIII, 151, no. 25). ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was concerned lest his close association with the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim would be discovered by Hārūn al-Rašīd, especially in light of the fact that the latter had sent out spies to ferret out Šīʻite sympathizers in his government. Indeed, were it not for the imam's advice to ʻAlī to keep his activities hidden from Hārūn al-Rašīd he would certainly have been killed.

Šīʻite writers report two instances in which the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim advised ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn to keep his activities secret. *The first incident*, known as the Durrāʻa Affair (*durrāʻa*: a long garment open at the front): ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was in the presence of Hārūn al-Rašīd when the latter received a present from the Byzantine emperor. Among the presents was a black *durrāʻa* of silk brocade with gold threads. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn looked at the presents and the caliph gave them to him as a present. ʻAlī then sent all the garments to the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, including the *durrāʻa*, and also added some money which he had prepared out of the «fifth»[11] of his assets. All this came to the imam, who kept the money and the clothes, but nine months later he sent the *durrāʻa* back to Ibn Yaqṭīn with instructions not to let it out of his possession since he would eventually need it. When ʻAlī received the imam's letter he was frightened, but kept the *durrāʻa*. A few days later ʻAli b. Yaqṭīn dismissed one of his servants, who knew of this employer's close relations with Mūsā al-Kāẓim and the things which Ibn Yaqṭīn sent him. He informed Hārūn al-Rašīd that Ibn Yaqṭīn recognized Mūsā al-Kāẓim as imam and sent him a fifth of his income every year, and also gave him the *durrāʻa*. The caliph was incensed and said that he would investigate the matter, and if he found that it was true then he would kill ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn. He immediately sent his men to bring Ibn Yaqṭīn. When the latter was brought into his presence he asked him: «What did you do with the *durrāʻa* with which I covered you?» Ibn Yaqṭīn answered: «O Commander of the Faithful, I keep it in a sealed and perfumed basket. I have guarded it well. I open it, look at it and kiss it, then put it back in its place, every morning and every evening». According to another version, ʻAlī said that he wore it during prayer.

Hārūn al-Rašīd asked Ibn Yaqṭīn to bring it to him immediately. The caliph called a servant and sent him to Ibn Yaqṭīn's house. The servant brought the *durrāʻa* to Hārūn, who saw that it was indeed folded in a perfumed con-

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[10] This is a call used by the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim on the day when the Abbasid caliph Mūsā al-Hādī wanted to kill him. The «al-Ǧawšan al-Ṣaġir» evokes many of the trials and tribulations which men experience. It is highly regarded by Šīʻites. For more details see: al-Qummī (1984: 200-17); al-Mağlisī (1984: XCI, 382-86).

[11] *Ḫums* is the Arabic word for One Fifth (1/5). According to Šīʻa Islamic legal terminology, it means «one-fifth of certain items which a person acquires as wealth, and which must be paid as an Islamic tax». For more details on *ḫums* see: Calder (1982); Sachededina (1980).

tainer. Hārūn's anger subsided and he asked ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn to put the garment back in its place. He said to him: «From this day on I shall not believe any slander». He gave Ibn Yaqṭīn a prize and ordered the servant to be given a thousand lashes, but after about five-hundred he died.[12] *The second incident*, known as the Ablution Affair: ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn had the habit of performing the ablution before prayer in the Sunnī manner,[13] in accordance with the principle of *taqiyya* (dissimulation). He sent a request to the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim to instruct him in the Šīʻite manner, but the imam commanded him to continue to perform the ritual as the Sunnīs do, until the proper time came, when he would teach him the Šīʻite manner of ablution. And indeed, after a time someone slandered ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn and told Hārūn al-Rašīd that he was a Šīʻite, an adherent of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim who performed the ablution in the manner of the latter. Hārūn al-Rašīd then summoned ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn and asked him to perform a number of duties in his home. When the time for prayer came al-Rašīd hid behind a wall in order to observe ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn unseen. ʻAlī performed the ablution as the imam had told him, that is in the Sunnī manner, whereupon Hārūn al-Rašīd rose and said to ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn: «Whoever claimed that you were Rāfiḍī[14] "defector" or "deserters" is a liar». After this the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim send a letter to ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn in which he told him that from then on he may perform the ablution in the Šīʻite manner, and explained to him the way it was to be done.[15]

How ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn Maintained Contact with the Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim

The two maintained contact in a number of ways, which were kept secret in order to prevent the Abbasid caliph from discovering their relationship. Occasionally ʻAlī sent letters to the imam via messengers. According to one

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[12] al-Mufīd (1992: 225-26); al-Ṭabrisī (1970: 302-3); al-Rāwandī (1988: I, 334-35), whence al-Maǧlisī (1984: XLVIII, 59-60, no. 2); al-Ṭabarī (1963: 158-59); al-Fattāl (1966: 213-14); al-Irbillī (1962: II, 224-25); Ibn Šahrāšūb (1959: IV, 289).

[13] The difference between the Sunnī and Šīʻī methods of ablution lie mainly in the way they wash their feet. The Šīʻites rub their feet while the Sunnīs wash them. For more on the rubbing of soles among the Šīʻites see Schacht (1953: 263-64).

[14] Rāfiḍī 'defector' or 'deserter'. The term is used by Sunni Muslims to refer to Šīʻī Muslims who do not recognize Abū Bakr and his successors as having been legitimate rulers of the early Muslim community. The term *rāfiḍa* followed the Šīʻa from a very early period, back to the uprising of Zayd b. ʻAlī, against the Umayyad Caliphate. This uprising foreshadowed the collapse of the dynasty, which in turn led to the split between those Šīʻī Muslims who agreed with Zayd and those who did not. The meaning of the term went through several changes over time. It became a popular pejorative term for Twelvers, intended to recall their rejection of Zayd b. ʻAlī and of the first Sunni Rāšīdūn, namely Abu Bakr, ʻUmar, and ʻUṯmān. See Kohlberg (1979).

[15] al-Rāwandī (1988: I, 335-36); al-Maǧlisī (1984: XLVIII, 136-37, no. 11); Ibn Šahrāšūb (1959: IV, 288).

tradition ʻAlī once sent ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ to the imam with a request that the imam pray for him. The imam asked ʻAlī's messenger if ʻAlī wanted him to supplicate God for this world or the next. The messenger replied that Ibn Yaqṭīn wanted his supplication for the world to come, whereupon the imam al-Kāẓim placed his hand on the messenger's chest and said to him: «You may ensure ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn that the fire [of hell] will never touch him» (al-Kaššī 1929: 431, nos. 807-10).

The Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim Manifests His Love for ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn

The imam loved ʻAlī dearly. He not only promised him that he would go to heaven and that he would be saved from the fires of hell (Būḫamsīn 1990: 64-67), but also expressed his love on several occasions, as in the following instances:

A. One day ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn visited the imam al-Kāẓim, who was sitting with his companions at home. When ʻAlī appeared the imam looked at him and said to his companions: «Whoever would be happy to gaze at a companion of the Prophet of God, let him gaze at this man who has just come», and pointed at ʻAlī. One of those present asked excitedly: «Is he one who will go to Paradise?». The imam replied: «I testify that he will».

B. Another time ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn sent a messenger to the imam al-Kāẓim, in which he asked him to pray for him. When the messenger arrived he said to the imam: «O son of God's Messenger, Ibn Yaqṭīn sent me to you so would supplicate God for him». The imam asked him: «For the world to come?» and the messenger answered: «Yes», whereupon the imam said to him: «You may ensure ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn that the fire [of hell] will never touch him».

C. On yet another occasion Dāwūd al-Raqqī[16] gave the following report: «I came into the presence of my father al-Ḥasan (the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim) on the Day of Immolation» (the 10th day of the month of Ḏū'l-Ḥiǧǧa, the first day of the Feast of Sacrifice) and he said to me: «No one took notice of my when I was at al-Mawqif (a place of pilgrimage during the ḥaǧǧ near Minā) except for ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn, who stayed with me and did not leave me».

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[16] His cognomens were Abū Ḫālid and Abū Sulaymān. A client of the Banū Asad tribe, he transmitted traditions in the name of the imams Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā al-Kāẓim and ʻAlī al-Riḍā, and wrote two books, *al-Mazār* and *al-Ihlīliğa*. He died after the year 200 H, not long after the death of the imam al-Riḍā (d. 818). For more details see: Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 146, no. 584, 452, no. 173); Ibn al-Ġaḍā'irī (1994: 290); al-Barqī (1963: 32, 48); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 156, no. 410); al-Ḥillī (1990: 67, no. 1).

D. In a fourth report the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim said of ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn: «It is ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's good fortune that I mentioned him at al-Mawqif» (Būḫamsīn 1990: 66).

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn Supports the Šīʻite Poor

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn helped the Šīʻite poor. On the imam al-Kāẓim's directions he gave great sums and sent a fifth of his earnings to the imam. The fifth which he sent annually was a considerable amount of money, occasionally reaching hundreds of thousands of dirhams. ʻAlī also supported the imam in times of trouble and need. Whenever the imam al-Kāẓim was needy, or wanted to help someone for whom he cared, he would write to ʻAlī and ask him to buy or arrange what was needed (al-Kaššī 1929: 269, no. 484). Two of ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's companions relate that he sent them the following message: «Buy two female camels and stay off the road». He gave them money and letters and told them to bring them to the imam al-Kāẓim and to take care that no one discover what they were doing. They reported what happened: «We came to al-Kūfa and bought two female camels, took supplies and left. We travelled off the road until we came to Baṭn al-Rimma, where we tied the camels, put feed before them and sat down to eat. As we were eating a rider came with a mule, and as he approached we saw that it was the imam al-Kāẓim. We rose and greeted him, and gave him the letters and the other things we had with us». He took some letters out of his sleeve and gave them to us. He said: «These are the replies to the letters you brought». We said: «Our supplies are low. With your permission, we would like to enter al-Madīna, visit God's Messenger and buy some supplies». He said: «Show me your supplies». We took out our provisions and he turned them over in his hand and said: «This will be enough for you until you reach al-Kūfa, and as for God's Messenger, you have seen him» (*ibid.*: 436-37, no. 821).

Among those whom ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn supported was one ʻAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Kāhilī, Abū Muḥammad and his family. This he did at the request of the imam al-Kāẓim, who promised him in return that he would go to Paradise. ʻAlī fulfilled his obligation towards al-Kāhilī and his family until the latter's death. According to the reports what he sent was enough to support al-Kāhilī's family and his relatives as well (al-Ḥillī 1990: 108-9, no. 31; al-Kaššī 1929: 448, no. 841; al-Naǧāšī s.d.: 222, no. 580).

Secrecy and Concealment in ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Religious Behaviour

It is reported of ʻAlī that he kept his religious tendencies secret and did not perform Šīʻite rites, out of fear that his Šīʻite leanings would be found out. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn prayed often, but in secret (Būḫamsīn 1990: 128; al-Qurašī 1993: II, 285). He also concealed his pilgrimage to Mecca in a variety of ways.

In fact, every year he asked people to perform this duty for him. His secretary, Sulaymān b. al-Ḥusayn, states: «One year I counted one-hundred-and-fifty people who went on pilgrimage for ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn, to each of which he gave at least ten-thousand dirhams» (al-Kaššī 1929: 437, no. 824). If there is any truth in this tradition, it means that Ibn Yaqṭīn's income must have been very large indeed. It would seem that he used the pilgrimage as a means for giving support to Šīʻites in a way which would not arouse his enemies' suspicions. This conjecture is supported by the fact that among the people he helped were important personages such as ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥağğāğ and ʻAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Kāhilī, who were companions of the imam and disliked by the authorities (al-Ṭūsī 1970: 435). One final point in this respect is the fact that ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn included not only Šīʻite elders in his plan but others as well, for the purpose of making the Šīʻite creed known and to dispute with the other religious sects. ʻAlī was thus able to conceal his connection with Šīʻism and the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. In fact, he did this so well that a senior Šīʻite complained to the imam that he suspected ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn of being a dissimulator who only pretended to be a Šīʻite and an adherent of the imam. The imam asked him if he had evidence for his accusation. He replied that one day he was at a gathering in the home of a prominent man in Baghdad, and ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was also present. The host asked ʻAlī if he thought that Mūsā b. Ǧaʻfar was the imam rather than the reigning caliph. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn replied: «I do not say this. Rather, I say that Mūsā is not imam, whoever is not imam then Mūsā is not him, and I agree that this is my imamate and I reject the imamate of anyone else». The host then said: «May God give you recompense and may He curse those who slander you». The imam then said to the man who brought him this report: «It is not as you thought. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn is better versed in jurisprudence than you are». When he said «Mūsā is not imam» he meant that whoever is not imam, Mūsā is not like him, that is, he is imam, and he reiterated this by saying «this is my imamate» and rejected «the imamate of anyone but me». The imam then added: «O ʻAbdallāh, when will you cease from such suspicions about your brother. Do penance before God». When the man realized what the imam meant he was greatly distressed and said to him: «I do not possess money, but I have give half of my devotions and prayers to you, family of the Prophet, and my curses to your enemies». Thereupon the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim said to him: «Now you have escaped hellfire» (al-Mağlisī 1984: LXXII, 195, no. 7; al-Ṭabrisī 1982: 394-95; al-ʻAskarī 1988: 359-60).

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn as Vizier

Our written sources do not tell us the circumstances under which ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was appointed to the post of vizier by Hārūn al-Rašīd and the specific function he had. Šīʻite sources relate that ʻAlī had a close relationship with the Abbasids, by whom he was appointed to senior posts, and that Hārūn al-Rašīd

chose him to be his vizier. ʻAlī agreed to take the position after he had secretly sought the advice of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, al-Kāẓim who urged him to agree to the appointment. Later ʻAlī asked the imam a number of times for permission to resign, but the imam refused to accede to his request (al-Mağlisī 1984: XLVIII, 158, no. 32), and explained that his position was important for the preservation of Šīʻite lives, property and rights. The imam said to ʻAlī: «Safeguard me one tuft and I will safeguard you three». ʻAlī asked him: «What are they?», and the imam replied: «The three which I will safeguard you are: that the heat of iron will never strike and kill you, that you will never know poverty, and that you will never be put in prison; and the one thing you will guarantee is that you will respect every religious leader who comes to you». ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn accepted this request, and the imam guaranteed him the three (*ibid.*: 136, no. 10).

The imam al-Kāẓim said to ʻAlī: «We (the Šīʻites) have a friend in you and your brothers have strength in you. May God through you mend a fracture, and through you may He break the enmity of those who oppose His supporters» (*ibidem*).

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn remained true to his commitment and continued to give succour to the Šīʻites during his entire term of office and helped them in those dire times to maintain their lives and their independence.[17]

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Complaints About His Job as Vizier of Hārūn al-Rašīd

The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim once came to Iraq and met secretly with ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn. When the latter complained about his work as vizier the imam said to him: «O ʻAlī, God has supporters with the supporters of darkness, with whom He defends his own supporters, and you are one of them» (al-Mağlisī 1984: LXXII, 349-50, no. 56; al-Kaššī 1929: 43, no. 817). As mentioned above, ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn asked the imam a number of times for permission to resign, but the imam refused, out of concern for the lives of the Šīʻites.

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn as a Transmitter of Traditions

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn played an important role in the life of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim and his reports are often quoted in Šīʻite *ḥadīṯ* and history collections.

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[17] It is perhaps worth noting here that a number of companions of the imams joined the regime at various times and were able to help the Šīʻites in their positions. This they did on the instructions of the imams, as in the case of ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn who held the post of vizier under Hārūn al-Rašīd, as well as Dāwūd b. Zurbī Abū Sulaymān al-Ḫandaqī al-Bundār, another vizier under Hārūn al-Rašīd, Isḥāq al-Naysābūrī who governed Ahwāz under the Abbasids and was also a companion of the imam al-ʻAskarī (d. 847), and al-Ḥusayn al-Naysābūrī the Abbasid governor of Siğistān, a companion of the imam al-Jawād (d. 835). For more details see: Būḫamsīn (1990: 123); Fawzī (1987: 135).

In Šī'ite traditional sources 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn is often quoted as a reliable source of information about pronouncements which he heard from Mūsā al-Kāẓim, Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq and others. Most of these *ḥadīṯ*s contain answers to questions which were posed to the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Among other topics with which 'Alī's *ḥadīṯ*s deal are issues in Šī'ite jurisprudence, for example on funeral procedures (al-Kulaynī s.d.: III, 168, no. 1), charity (*ibid.*: III, 518, no. 5), the rules of the pilgrimage to Mecca (*ibid.*: IV, 380, no. 8), ritual ablution before prayer (*ibid.*: III, 18, no. 15), major ritual impurity (*ibid.*: III, 46, no. 3), why God spoke to Mūsā (*ibid.*: III, 123), pregnant woman who dies (*ibid.*: III, 155, no. 1), the traveler's prayer (*ibid.*: III, 435, no. 8), and others. It is, however, very difficult to determine whether 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn did in fact report all the *ḥadīṯ*s attributed to him or whether some or most of them are later fabrications.

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's Ḥadīṯs About His Spiritual Masters (šayḫ)

Many of 'Alī's *ḥadīṯ*s report the words of the imams, especially al-Kāẓim. In all, some 187 *ḥadīṯ*s about the imams are ascribed to him. From the *ḥadīṯ*s found in various Šī'ite sources and ascribed to 'Alī, it appears that he had nineteen spiritual masters: the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, who held a very important place in his life (al-Kulaynī s.d.: I, 313, no. 10; II, 13, no. 2; III, 168, no. 1; III, 435, no. 8; VI, 434, no. 24; al-Ḥillī 1990: 91, no. 3); the imam Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq, in whose name he related a single *ḥadīṯ* (al-Ḥillī 1990: 91, no. 5; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: I, 166, no. 48); Muḥammad b. Sinān (al-Kulaynī s.d.: IV, 25, no. 3); al-Faḍl b. Kaṯīr al-Madā'inī (*ibid.*: II, 106, no. 5; V, 317, no. 52); 'Īsā b. Sulaymān (al-Kaššī 1929: 396, no. 597); Yūnus, 'Alī's teacher (al-Kulaynī s.d.: IV, 505, no. 3); Ḥafṣ b. 'Amr b. Muḥammad Abū Muḥammad (*ibid.*: IV, 541, no. 5); his muezzin, whose name was al-Ḥusayn b. Ḫālid (*ibid.*: V, 104, no. 5; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: VI, 209, no. 2); 'Amr b. Ibrāhīm (al-Kulaynī s.d.: V, 236, no. 17); 'Āṣim b. Ḥumayd (*ibid.*: V, 391, no. 7); Yūnus b. Ya'qūb (*ibid.*: V, 236, no. 17)[18] b. Qays Abū 'Alī al-Ǧalāb al-Baǧalī al-Dahnī; Muḥammd b. Hāšim (*ibid.*: VI, 31, no. 5); Ruhm al-Anṣārī;[19] al-Madāyinī (al-Kaššī 1929: 398, no. 743); Hāšim b. Ḫālid (al-Kulaynī s.d.: VI, 405, no. 3); Bakr b. Muḥammad (*ibid.*: VI, 428, no. 1); 'Amr b. Ibrāhīm (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: III, 31, no. 21; III, 282, no. 157); and al-Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāḥ (*ibid.*: VII, 10, no. 38).

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[18] al-Kulaynī (s.d.: VI, 4, no. 4). For details on his life see, for example: al-Ḥillī (1990: 185, no. 2; 265, no. 2); Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 382, no. 1709, 533); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 323; s.d.*b*: 182, no. 790); al-Kaššī (1929: 385, no. 720); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 446, no. 1207).

[19] al-Ḥillī (1990: 72, no. 4). For details on his life see: al-Kaššī (1929: 454, no. 858); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 336, no. 5008-1); Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 154, no. 611).

His Disciples and Transmitters

In this section we deal with those people who learned the imams' words from ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn and transmitted them. To judge by the available sources he appears to have had eighteen disciples: his son al-Ḥasan (al-Kulaynī s.d.: I, 11, no. 7; II, 106, no. 5), al-Ḥusayn b. Mayyāḥ (*ibid.*: I, 58, no. 18; V, 158, no. 7; V, 305, no. 8), Ibn Abī ʻUmayr (*ibid.*: II, 123, no. 7; III, 192, no. 2; III, 435, no. 8; III, 155, no. 1; III, 547, no. 5; IV, 380, no. 8; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: VII, 224, no. 73), Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥamza (al-Kulaynī s.d.: VI, 186, no. 5), Ḥarīz (*ibid.*: III, 518, no. 8), Ibrāhīm b. Abī Maḥmūd (*ibid.*: V, 110, no. 3; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: VI, 335, no. 48), Ḥamād b. ʻUṯmān (*ibid.*: II, 212, no. 24), ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ (*ibid.*: VII, 22, no. 92), his muezzin Ḥafṣ b. ʻAmr b. Muḥammad Abū Muḥammad (al-Kaššī 1929: 432, no. 814), Yaʻqūb b. Yazīd (al-Kulaynī s.d.: VI, 387, no. 1), Sulaym (his slave) ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn (*ibid.*: VIII, 383, no. 583), Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā (al-Ṣadūq 1993: I, 415, no. 1226), Ǧaʻfar b. ʻĪsā b. ʻUbayd (*ibid.*: IV, 209), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʻĪsā (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: I, 111, no. 26), Abū Ḫālid (his slave; *ibid.*: V, 491, no. 410), his brother Yaʻqūb (*ibid.*: III, 11, no. 36; III, 12, no. 19.), his brother Ayyūb (*ibid.*: III, 101, no. 35.), and his scribe Sulaymān b. al-Ḥusayn (al-Kaššī 1929: 437, no. 824).

Conclusion

ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn, as we saw, was born in al-Kūfa and then moved with his family to Baghdad, where he grew up in a period of political troubles, at the end of the Umayyad and the beginning of the Abbasid period. He was an adherent of the Šīʻa, as was his father, and was the contemporary of the two imams Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He reported numerous *ḥadīṯ*s quoting the latter. ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn served as vizier under two Abbasid caliphs, Mūsā al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rašīd. As we found in our study, ʻAlī's position in the Abbasid caliphate enabled him to help the Šīʻites in two ways. First, he was privy to important information concerning the confrontation between the Abbasid authorities and the Šīʻites, which he was able to provide the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim with. Second, he was able to provide generous financial support to needy Šīʻites. He also contributed to Šīʻite jurisprudence in the form of three books on this subject that he composed, and 187 *ḥadīṯ*s about the imams, which were later transmitted by his numerous disciples. During the entire time in which he held the post of vizier ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn successfully concealed his religious beliefs and his association with Mūsā al-Kāẓim. More than once he asked the imam to be allowed to resign his post in the Abbasid administration, but the imam turned down his request, since in his position he was able to help the Šīʻites. The taxes which ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn collected from the Šīʻites he returned to them clandestinely. He kept his relationship with the imam a secret and his entire behaviour is in line with the Šīʻite principle of dissimulation

(*taqiyya*). Using his innate wisdom and with the help of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim's instructions, ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn was able to provide great assistance to the Šīʻites, warn them of impending steps which the Abbasid caliph intended to take against them and supported them financially. He devoted a great part of his life, occasionally at considerable personal risk, to serve the members of his denomination.

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SUMMARY

The present study discusses ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn, an important Šīʻite figure of the 2nd 8th century, a student of the sixth imam Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq and the seventh imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, and analyzes his role in the shaping of Šīʻism and Šīʻite religious jurisprudence. Ibn Yaqṭīn held the post of vizier under two Abbasid caliphs, al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rašīd. He used his position within the Abbasid regime in two ways: he obtained information relevant to the confrontation between the Šīʻites and their enemies and gave it to the imams, and he gave very generous financial support to needy Šīʻites. The study also describes ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's personal characteristics, his piety, and the 186 traditions which he reported in the names of the two imams Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim, by which he enriched Šīʻite religious law.

Keywords: Abbasid vizier, ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn, Early Šīʻite history, Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā al-Kāẓim, Šīʻite religious jurisprudence, Abbasid caliphs, al-Hādī, Hārūn al-Rašīd.

BRILL

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Al-Mustabṣirūn, "Those Who Are Able To See The Light": Sunnī Conversion to Twelver Shīʿism in Modern Times

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Emek Yezreel

Abstract

The present study's objective is to analyze the phenomenon of the *mustabṣirūn* in Twelver Shīʿism in modern times. The term *mustabṣir* is used among (Twelver) Shīʿites to refer to someone who has left his previous faith, converted to Shīʿism and adopted its doctrines. In this study we inquire into the meaning of the term in general, in the Qurʾān and its commentaries, and as a specific term. We examine the motivation for conversion to Shīʿism, the types and status of converts and the reasons which drive them to convert, the pressures and threats which converts face from Sunnī circles and how converts cope with these and respond to the attacks on them. The study also surveys *mustabṣir* websites and their contents, books which such converts have written, describing their conversion experience, as well as factors which have contributed to the popularity of the conversion movement, among them the support which Iranian cultural missions provide to converts, the Lebanon War of 2006 and the burgeoning popularity of Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh, the political protection which many converts enjoy, monetary and economic emoluments given to converts, and Shīʿite satellite TV stations and websites. The study's main conclusion is that the terms *mustabṣir* ("he who has had his eyes opened", convert to Twelver Shīʿism) and *istibṣār* (the verbal noun: conversion) have taken on a clear and definite meaning, denoting a real trend in recent years, although still relatively limited in scope, so that at present and in the foreseeable future Sunnī Muslims have no reason to fear this trend.

Keywords

Shīʿa, Twelver Shīʿa, conversion, Ḥizbullāh, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, ʿAlī, caliphate, imamate, Prophet

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Introduction

The term *mustabṣir* is used among contemporary Shīʿites to denote a convert to Shīʿism. Literally the term means "having had his eyes opened", so that the more such a convert learns about his faith and the Prophet's family, the more "his eyes are opened" and thus the greater his *istibṣār*.[1]

The verb and its derivations in this use can be traced back to the dawn of Islam, when people began to join the new religion in droves. As scholars and intellectuals began to disseminate their new faith, those who decided to adopt it considered themselves as having come out of darkness into light and thus "had their eyes opened", individually and collectively, in every part of the Muslim world.[2]

Islam throughout its history has witnessed more than one wave of significant Shīʿite expansion. Some of these introduced a significant, albeit transitory, Shīʿite presence for some time in the affected territories, as was the case, for example, in Egypt and Palestine during the Fāṭimid period. In our times certain official religious Shīʿite organizations have undertaken the mission of spreading Shīʿism among Sunnī Muslims. Among these organizations are the Center for Doctrinal Studies (*Markaz al-Abḥāth al-ʿAqāʾidiyya*) under the auspices of the Shīʿite religious authority (*marjaʿ*) Fāris Ḥassūn, and the Āl al-Bayt World Center (*Markaz Āl al-Bayt al-ʿĀlamī*), headed by the *marjaʿ* al-Sīstānī; both of these centers have their own websites.

Conversion to Shīʿism (*istibṣār*) has in many Arab and Muslim countries become a significant intellectual and cultural force. According to some observers[3] the cultural and intellectual importance which this phenomenon has attained is due to the fact that often such converts are among the country's leading intellectuals, whose prominence has made the fact of their conversion resonate strongly in Shīʿite circles.

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1) See Ḥasan Farḥān al-Mālikī , "Qirāʾa fī l-taḥawwulāt al-sunniyya li-l-shīʿa", *al-Majalla* issue 1082, 11 November 2000.

2) See Ghulām Aṣghar al-Bajnūrī, *al-Mustabṣirūn*, ed. ʿAlī al-ʿUsaylī (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣafwa, 1993), p. 11.

3) Al-Yamanī, *http://almostabsiroon.com/index.php?option*, 2006 (accessed 27 February 2009).

Istibṣār and *mustabṣir* in Arabic Lexicography, in the Qurʾān, and as a Shīʿite Term

According to the *Lisān al-ʿarab*, the verb *istabṣara* means "distinguished between the good and the evil he encountered".[4] The author of the *Kitāb al-ʿayn* has the following definition: "*istabṣara* on the matter of one's religion means to have discernment (*baṣīra*), namely to be convinced of the truth of one's faith in one's heart".[5] In the *Majmaʿ al-baḥrayn* the term *mustabṣir* is defined as "one who sees the matter clearly".[6] In its original meaning the word thus denotes a person of discernment, capable of distinguishing between good and evil.

The word *mustabṣir* appears only once in the Qurʾān, in the plural form. In Q 29:38, in reference to the people of ʿĀd and Thamūd, we read: "And ʿĀd and Thamūd—but it is plain to you from their habitations; for Satan made seemly to them their works, and turned them from the way, sagacious (*mustabṣirīn*) though they were!" According to the *Biḥār al-anwār* the word in this verse means "wise persons, capable of distinguishing between truth and falseness by sight, or believing that they are on the right path".[7] To a question which Abū Baṣīr[8] asked the sixth Twelver imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq[9] (d. 765) on the interpretation of Q 25:73, "and those who when they are reminded of the signs of their Lord do not fall down thereat deaf and blind", he was given the follow-

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4) Ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī, Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1990), p. 65, s.v. BṢR.

5) Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-ʿayn*, vol. 7, ed. Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1408/1988), p. 117, s.v. BṢR.

6) Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭarīḥī, *Majmaʿ al-baḥrayn*, vol. 1, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm: Maktab Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1395/1975), p. 207, s.v. BṢR.

7) Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 11 (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1984), p. 19.

8) There are four known figures whose agnomen is Abū Baṣīr: Layth b. al-Bakhtarī al-Murādī, Yaḥyā b. Abū Qāsim, Yūsuf b. al-Ḥārith, and ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Asadī; for more details see Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma al-Ḥillī* (Qumm: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir, 1411/1990), pp. 392f.; Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī Taqiyy al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, *Kitāb al-Rijāl* (Teheran: Published Foundation at the University of Tehran, 1383/1963), p. 393, nos. 7-9. It is not clear which of these is meant here, since all of them transmitted traditions in the imam al-Ṣādiq's name.

9) For details on him see: M.G.S. Hodgson, "Djaʿfar al-Ṣādiq", *EI*², 2, pp. 374f.

ing answer by the imam: "What is meant by them is the *mustabṣirīn*, not those who are skeptical of their religion."[10]

In Shīʿite usage the word *mustabṣir* denotes someone who has left his faith and converted to Shīʿism, after "God showed him the right path and made him see with his heart, not with his eye, the way of truth, and did everything in his power to embrace the right religion […] the religion of truth which brings salvation, and who is prepared to defend the Shīʿite creed".[11]

Such a person, who "has seen the light" is called *mustabṣir* "because light, that is seeing or observing, comes about through discerning (*istibṣār*)". A *mustabṣir* is also someone who has been shown the right path and who has come to realize the proper status of the Prophet's family, whose love has settled in his heart. The reason why Shīʿites have adhered to this term is their call to join the Shīʿte faith. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is quoted as saying that "the *mustabṣir* endures war calmly and is faithful in battle".[12] The term *mustabṣir* thus denotes, in the Shīʿite view,[13] those individuals who have chosen Shīʿism from among all Islamic sects, having realized that it is the only true faith, the one which God and His Messenger commanded, and which represents the path taken by the Prophet's family.

Motives for Conversion

A perusal of books written by *mustbṣirūn* reveals the following motives for conversion:

A. The Sunnī creed is perceived as lacking the solidity or strength to survive on its own. Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī has this to say on the matter:

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10) Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8 (Teheran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 4th edition, 1946), p. 178, *ḥadīth* 199, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 16, p. 262.

11) See *http://www.alsanabis.com/article.php?newsID=864* (accessed 27 February 2009).

12) Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 20 (1404/1983), p. 288.

13) It is worth noting in this connection, that converts to Shīʿism are also called *mutaḥawwil* ("transformed, converted"); the latter term refers to anyone who converts either from the Sunnī to the Shīʿite creed or the reverse. For more details see: Usāma Shiḥāda, *al-Mushkila al-shīʿiyya* (Cairo: Kitāb al-Rāṣid 3, 2008), p. 102.

> The doctrine of the Sunnīs is an official creed, which has lived under the protection of rulers from its inception to this day. It obtained support and legitimacy from these rulers, and by this was able to survive and spread. That is the only reason why this faith has been able to maintain its central position as the majority religion. Actually it should have come to an end, were it not for its adoption by the rulers.[14]

B. Recognition of the legitimacy of the imams descending from the Prophet, especially through the line of Fāṭima and al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, and the influence of the story of the latter's tragic death at Karbalāʾ.[15]
C. Encounters between Sunnī converts to Shīʿism (before their conversion) with Shīʿites. Such encounters at times played a role in their decision to convert (become *mustabṣirūn*).[16]
D. Some converts were convinced by the evidence found in books and in accounts of the Prophet's sayings and doings (*sunna*); such converts were Muḥammad Marʿī al-Anṭākī, Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī, and others.[17]
E. Others were convinced after having read books by Shīʿites and by other converts to Shīʿism; one such a convert was Idrīs al-Ḥusaynī.

Stages of Conversion (*istibṣār*)

According to ʿAlāʾ al-Ḥassūn a new convert (*mustabṣir*) to Twelver Shīʿism goes through the following stages and grades:

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14) Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī, *Ahl al-sunna: shaʿb Allāh al-mukhtār (dirāsa fī fasād ʿaqāʾid) ahl al-sunna* (n. p.: Kanūta Ṭibāʿa Nashr wa-Tawzīʿ, 1417/1997), p. 65.

15) See, for example: Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Mutawakkil, *Wa-dakhalnā l-tashayyuʿ sujjadan* (Beirut: Dār al-Khalīj al-ʿArabī li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 2nd edition, 1422/2001), p. 40; ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ḥasan, *Bi-nūr Fāṭima htadaytu* (Beirut: Dār al-Khalīj al-ʿArabī li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 2nd edition, 1420/1999), p. 210; Idrīs al-Ḥusaynī, *Laqad shayyaʿanī l-Ḥusayn (ʿalayhi l-salām) … al-intiqāl al-ṣaʿb fī riḥāb al-muʿtaqad wa-l-madhhab* (Beirut: Dār al-Nakhīl li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1414/1993).

16) Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī, *al-Khidʿa … raḥalatnī min al-sunna ilā l-shīʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Nakhīl li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1416/1995), p. 17.

17) See, for example: Muḥammad Marʿī al-Anṭākī, *Li-mādhā khtartu madhhab al-shīʿa madhab ahl al-bayt (alayhim al-salām)*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿUqaylī (Qumm: Office of Islamic Information Press, 1417/1996), p. 51; Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī, *Li-akūna maʿa l-ṣādiqīn* (Qumm: Muʾassasat Anṣāriyān li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr), p. 44.

A. At first the prospective convert comes to realize the error of the beliefs which he held his entire life and enters a period of doubt and confusion. His mind becomes a battleground between the old convictions of the past and the new information obtained by reading in the books of the Shīʿites. As an example, al-Tījānī describes the confusion which had beset him as follows: "I remained perplexed and at a loss for three months, during which I was drawn by my thoughts, and driven hither and thither by doubts and imaginations."[18]
B. In the next stage doubt comes to an end. All *mustabṣirūn* report that their continued researches into the Shīʿite faith convinced them ever more firmly of its truth.[19]
C. Then comes a stage of preparing oneself for the change in denomination. Their decision to leave the Sunnī faith and convert to Shīʿism does raise difficulties and obstacles for the *mustabṣirūn*, but at this stage their internal doubts are at an end and they feel calm and spiritually at peace.[20] They are then overcome with feelings which, so they claim, cannot be fathomed by anyone who has not undergone this experience. They are overcome with a sense of well-being and security, as if a heavy load of worry and doubt had been lifted from them. They feel happy for having abandoned falseness and come to know the truth.[21]

The steps through which converts are taken are the following:

The first step: The first step in conversion consists of coming to believe that the Prophet's descendants are the rightful imams, that a great

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[18] Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī, *Thumma htadaytu* (Qumm: Muʾassasat Anṣāriyān li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 2nd edition, 1417/1996), p. 123. For more information about converts' vacillations see: Hishām Āl Quṭayṭ, *Wa-min al-ḥiwār iktashaftu l-ḥaqīqa* (Beirut: Dār al-Muntaẓar, 1421/2000), p. 35; al-Ḥusaynī, *Laqad shayyaʿanī l-Ḥusayn*, p. 16.

[19] See, for example: Marwān Khalīfāt, *Wa-rakibtu l-safīna* (Qumm: Markaz al-Ghadīr li-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 1418/1997), p. 18; al-Mutawakkil, *Wa-dakhalnā l-tashayyuʿ sujjadan*, p. 40; al-Ḥusaynī, *Laqad shayyaʿanī l-Ḥusayn*, p. 63.

[20] Al-Ḥusaynī, *Laqad shayyaʿanī l-Ḥusayn*, p. 357.

[21] For more details see Āl Quṭayṭ, *Wa-min al-ḥiwār iktashaftu l-ḥaqīqa*, p. 9; Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī, *Fa-sʾalū ahl al-dhikr* (Qumm: Muʾassasat Anṣāriyān li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, n. d.), p. 19.

historical wrong was done to them by the Prophet's Companions and the Muslim states which emerged later (the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates), that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had a greater right to take the Prophet's place than Abū Bakr, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the other caliphs, and that ʿAlī's descendants are the Islamic nation's true leaders, who were deprived of their rightful position.

The second step: After a *mustabṣir* has become convinced of ʿAlī's legitimacy and of the wrongs committed against his progeny, he begins to study the Shīʿite creed and its religious law, through books on Shīʿite doctrine and jurisprudence.

The converts in the Arab world do not deny their close spiritual links to the *ḥawza* in the city of Qumm in Iran. In fact, in Qumm CDs are distributed which contain the stories of "Arab *mustabṣirūn*". Today the *ḥawza* by Zaynab's shrine in Damascus is a major center for converts, who go there to study the Shīʿite creed and strengthen their ties with other Shīʿites. They are provided with books by the Shīʿite imams, and especially with the writings of Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh, which are published by Dār al-Malāk in Lebanon; this publishing house specializes in the publication of his books, the most prominent of which is *Juridical Regulations* (*al-Aḥkām al-fiqhiyya*).

Here we should note that converts are not required to pay the "fifth"[22] imposed on other Shīʿites, nor is it demanded of them that they follow a specific religious authority. This provides them with a certain measure of security in case they are investigated in certain countries, Jordan for example.[23] They also consistently adopt the Shīʿite practice of "dissimulation" (*taqiyya*),[24] i.e. they deny their Shīʿism whenever this can help them avoid trouble.

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22) The "fifth" is a tax on everything which a Shīʿite acquires in his life, by war or by other means (such as commerce). The Shīʿites divide the "fifth" into six parts: one for God, one for the Prophet, one for relatives, one for orphans, one for the poor, and one for wayfarers. The first three of these parts, half of the total, are considered to belong to the Prophet's family and the imams. For more details on the "fifth" in Shīʿism, see, for example, N. Calder, "Khums in Imāmī Shīʿī Jurisprudence, from the Tenth to the Sixteenth Century A.D.", in *BSOAS* 45 (1982), pp. 39-47; Abdulaziz Sachedina, "*Al-Khums*: The Fifth in the Imāmī Shīʿī Legal System", in *JNES* 39 (1980), pp. 275-289.

23) See the newspaper *al-Bayyina*, issue 478, 12 August 2007.

24) "Dissimulation" is one of the important principles of Twelver Shīʿism, a consequence

Types of Converts

The Shīʿites recognize three types of converts:

A. *Convinced converts*: This type of convert (*mustabṣir*) has studied and read the Shīʿite religious literature and has become convinced of its truth in the same manner as any believing Shīʿite. As a result he declares his conversion to the Shīʿite creed. Shīʿites greet such a convert with the formula: "May you enjoy the new light. You are welcome among us as a brother. May God bless you with the discernment of your heart."
B. *Lost converts*: This type of convert has joined the Shīʿite faith because he is not convinced of his own creed's truth. He wants to try out Shīʿism in order to see if he can be convinced of its correctness. To this type of convert Shīʿites say: "Be certain of your faith. Do not leave one creed for another before you have become convinced that your new creed is the right way." Shīʿites consider such converts useless and treat them as pretenders (*mutashayyiʿ*), not as real Shīʿites.
C. *Sneaky converts* (*mundass*): Such converts claim to have chosen to become Shīʿites out of conviction, but in fact act like hypocrites; they try to ferret out errors made by the Shīʿites in order to destroy the sect. This type is considered by Shīʿites as particularly dangerous and insidious.

The Converts' Situation and Society's Reaction to Them

Al-Bajnūrī[25] states that the *mustabṣirūn* can expect to be treated very badly by their relatives and their people, although they do not fear their calumnies. He explains this as follows:

> When the veil is lifted from the truth, and a person learns to distinguish between truth and falsity, he will pull up the roots of bigotry and violence

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of the political repression to which Shīʿites were exposed, which made the imams decree this a necessary survival measure. For more on this topic see: E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on *Taqiyya*", in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975), pp. 395-402; E. Meyer, "Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der taqiyya", in *Isl.* 57 (1980), pp. 246-280.

25) Al-Bajnūrī, *al-Mustabṣirūn*, p. 12.

> and choose the path of truth. His bigotry and violence he will then turn towards what is false, even more so than he did towards the truth before having chosen it, because before it was the result of ignorance and poor vision, whereas now he possesses the truth in all its certainty. So he does not heed his people and his tribe, nor will he fear what they can be expected to do, or poverty or misery, because he says: "God is enough for us. How excellent is God." He abandons his position and standing in order to tread the path of truth and certainty, and is ready to withstand any difficulty and travail.

After the fact that a person has converted to Shīʿism becomes known he often faces a very hostile reaction on the part of the society in which he lives. The convert's acquaintances frequently react with accusations that the convert is a heretic who betrayed the principles of his society. They will try to do everything in their power to pressure him into returning to his former faith, usually without success, although occasionally converts will claim to have been forced into adopting Shīʿism.[26] ʿAlāʾ al-Ḥassūn notes that the *mustabṣirūn* as a rule manage to remain firm in the face of their molestation by their own society. He attributes this to the converts' sense of power, their belief that their newfound faith makes them capable of overcoming all obstacles.[27] The steps taken against a convert can be material; he may be forced into poverty or deprived of his rightful inheritance; sometimes even violence is used by anti-Shīʿite groups. However, to judge by what the converts themselves have written about their experiences, the harassment which they had to endure did not cause them to deviate from their course.[28]

Sunnī Criticism of Converts to Shīʿism and Rebuttal of This Criticism

Converts to Shīʿism are subject to ferociously written attacks by Sunnīs, especially Salafīs. The attacks, usually on websites, cast doubt on the

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[26] For some examples of the travails which some *mustabṣirūn* underwent, see al-Samāwī, *Fa-sʾalū ahl al-dhikr*, pp. 173f.; Ahmad Sayyid, *al-Ḥaqīqa al-ḍāʾiʿa … riḥlatī naḥwa madhhab āl al-bayt (ʿalayhim al-salām)* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Maʿārif al-Islāmiyya, 1417/1996), pp. 23ff.; al-Mutawakkil, *Wa-dakhalnā l-tashayyuʿ sujjadan*, pp. 66f.

[27] ʿAlāʾ al-Ḥassūn, *al-Taḥawwul al-madhhabī* (an analytic study of the *mustabṣirūn* journey to the creed of the Prophet's family) (Markaz al-Abḥāth al-ʿAqāʾidiyya, *http://www.aqaed.com/shialib/books/03/tahavvuol/index.html*, accessed 27 February 2009).

[28] Ibid., p. 280.

reality of the conversions. The Salafīs argue that some of the so-called converts simply do not exist, that they are imaginary figures created by the Shīʿites for the purpose of disseminating their creed. They claim that the books which *mustabṣirūn* are supposed to have written were in fact composed by Shīʿites for missionary purposes. More specifically, one of the personages whose existence has been denied is the Syrian *mustabṣir* Muḥammad Marʿī al-Amīn al-Anṭākī, author of *Li-mādhā khtartu madhhab al-shīʿa* ("Why I Chose the Shīʿite Creed"). The Salafī propagandist ʿUmar al-Dawsarī has investigated al-Anṭākī's claim that he studied at al-Azhar University and his conversion from Ṣūfism to Shīʿism. He reports that his research has revealed that a person by the name of al-Anṭākī does not exist, at least not in the list of al-Azhar graduates, and that the book supposedly written by him was in fact written by an anonymous Shīʿite writer for the purpose of disseminating the Shīʿite creed.[29]

Al-Dawsarī also claims to have investigated another *mustabṣir*, ʿIṣām al-ʿImād, who supposedly studied at the *ḥadīth* faculty of King Saud University in Saudi Arabia and later converted to Shīʿism. Al-Dawsarī reports that his researches revealed that this university did not have a "*ḥadīth* faculty" at all. A third convert whom he investigated was a certain al-Tījānī, who claimed to have been a Sunnī leader at the al-Zaytūna Mosque in Tunis. Al-Dawsarī perused the student lists at the mosque and did not find his name. His conclusion: Shīʿites invent people in order to disseminate their creed.

The converts of course reject these claims and counter the attacks against them. They frequently also explain what motivated them to convert to Shīʿism. Thus, for example, Muḥammad Marʿī al-Amīn al-Anṭākī explains his conversion as having been due to a number of factors:

A. He realized that conversion to Shīʿism satisfied his conscience, as a creed to which the former *shaykh al-Azhar*, Muḥammad Shaltūt, gave his approval in his most famous legal ruling.[30]

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29) See the website: *www.alsrdaab.com/vb/showthread.php?t=35233* (accessed 27 February 2009).

30) This ruling (*fatwā*), given on 17 Rabīʿ I 1378/1 October 1958, states, among other things, that "the Jaʿfarī school, known as Imāmī Twelver Shīʿism, is a school according to

B. He became convinced of the worthiness of the creed of the Prophet's family, since it derives from the imams, who received it from their ancestor the Prophet, who received it from Gabriel, who received it from God himself.
C. Since God's revelation came down in their family, the members of the family know best what was revealed.
D. Many verses in the Qurʾān support the claims of the Shīʿites, for example, the Verse of Sovereignty (Q 5:55): "God only is your patron, and His Apostle and those who believe, who are steadfast in prayer and give alms, bowing down"; the Verse of Purification (Q 33:33): "God only wishes to take away from you the horror as people of His House and to purify you thoroughly"; the Verse of Imprecation (Q 3:61): "And whoso disputeth with thee after what has come to thee of knowledge, say, 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves: then we will imprecate and put God's curse on those who lie'"; the Verse of Love (Q 42:23): "Say, 'I do not ask for it a hire—only the love of my kinsfolk'", and others.
E. There are transmitted traditions (*ḥadīth*) and reports which prove the worthiness of the Prophet's family, among them the following: the Ḥadīth of Knowledge, in which the Prophet is quoted as saying: "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate; whoever wants to enter the city, let him come to the gate";[31] the Ḥadīth of Rank, according to which the Prophet said to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: "You have with respect to me the same rank as Aaron had with respect to Moses, except that there will be no prophet after me";[32] the Ḥadīth

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whose precepts one may validly worship, just like the Sunnī schools. It is well for Muslims to know that." For more details see: Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Ṭarabjī, "Fatwā Shaltūt", in *al-Mawsim* 60 (2007), pp. 69-76; Maḥmūd Shaltūt, "Risālat al-Azhar", supplement to *al-Azhar*, January 1959 issue.

31) For details on this *ḥadīth* see, for example, Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. 2 (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-ʿAllāma li-l-Nashr, 1959), p. 34; al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Nahj al-ḥaqq wa-kashf al-ṣidq* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Hijra, 1986), p. 221.

32) Shīʿites use this *ḥadīth* as evidence for ʿAlī's exalted rank, for his right to act as the Prophet's successor, and for his having inherited all the Prophet's virtues except for the power of prophecy. For more on this *ḥadīth* see: al-Ḥasan Yūsuf al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Kashf*

> of Ghadīr Khumm: "To whomsoever I was master, ʿAlī is his master, by God, befriend whoever befriended him, show enmity to whoever was his enemy, help whomever helped him, abandon whomever abandoned him, and turn to the truth wherever it revolves";[33] the Ḥadīth of the Day of Warning:[34] "The Prophet said, pointing to ʿAlī: 'This is my brother, my executor, my successor, listen to him and obey'"; and, finally, the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet says: "'Alī is of me, and I am of ʿAlī, and nobody can discharge my duty except myself and ʿAlī."

Al-Tījānī in his rebuttal to critics of his conversion to Shīʿism states that a number of factors drove him to take this step, including the afore-mentioned *ḥadīth*s which show that ʿAlī was the Prophet's rightful successor.

The *mustabṣir* scholar and journalist Idrīs al-Ḥusayn, author of *Laqad shayyaʿanī l-Ḥusayn* ("Ḥusayn Converted Me") speaks in his book about the steps which the Prophet took to ensure ʿAlī's status as leader of the Muslims in the future, among them the afore-mentioned *ḥadīth*s, especially the Ḥadīth of Warning, or the Day of the House, in which the Prophet announced in the presence of the leaders of the tribe of Quraysh that ʿAlī would be their leader and his successor. Here is a concise account of the incident as reported in Muslim sources:

When Q 26:214, "but warn thy clansmen who are near of kin", was revealed, the Messenger called his relatives, including Abū Lahab, and said:

> O sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭallib, I swear to God that I know of youth among the Arabs who brought more virtue than you have, but I have brought you the

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al-yaqīn fī faḍā'il amīr al-mu'minīn, ed. Ḥusayn al-Darkāhī (Teheran: Mu'assasat al-Ṭabʿ wa-l-Nashr, 1411/1990), pp. 280ff.

33) For more details on this *ḥadīth* see ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr fī l-kitāb wa-l-sunna wa-l-adab* (Qumm: Mu'assasat Dā'irat al-Fiqh al-Islāmī, 2004), part one; L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Ghadīr Khumm", *EI*², 2, pp. 993f.

34) A number of sources report that the Prophet Muḥammad invited his family to a banquet, at which he proposed that they embrace Islam. He said that whoever believed in him would be his successor after his death. No one answered him except for ʿAlī. This *ḥadīth* has been given the name of the Ḥadīth of the Day of the House, the Warning of the Day of the House, or the Call on the Tribe.

> good of this world and the next. God, may He be strong and exalted, commanded me to invite you to it. So who amongst you believes in me and will help me in this matter, and be my brother, my executor and my successor?

The people were silent and did not respond, except for ʿAlī, who said: "I, o Messenger of God, will be your helper in the matter for which God has sent you." After he repeated this three times he looked at them and said: "This is my brother, my executor, and my successor amongst you, listen to him and obey him." The people laughed and said to Abū Ṭālib: "He has commanded you to listen to your own son and obey him; indeed, he placed him over you as a ruler."

Al-Ḥusaynī comments on this:

> That was the first situation of the Messenger in his call for Islam, in which ʿAlī was definitely placed at the head. This happened at the Warning of the Clan, the first step of his mission which coincided with the presentation of ʿAlī's imamate, showing the integration between the mission and the imamate.[35]

A rebuttal of the claims put forward by the Syrian *shaykh* Hishām Āl Quṭayṭ in his *al-Mutaḥawwilūn* was written by the Saudi scholar Khālid al-Badīwī, in his book entitled *Aʿlām al-taṣḥīḥ wa-l-iʿtidāl*. He bolstered his arguments with the views of several prominent Shīʿite scholars, some of whom abandoned the Shīʿite creed and others who renounced its exaggerations.[36] The political and communal implications of conversion to Sunnism in Iraq were brought in by Usāma Shiḥāda, who claimed that 250,000 Iraqi Shīʿites converted to the Sunnī creed during the 1990s, most of whom were murdered by the Shīʿite militias after the fall of Baghdad.[37]

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[35] Muḥammad al-Kuthayrī, *al-Salafiyya bayna ahl al-sunna wa-l-imāmiyya* (Beirut: Markaz al-Ghadīr li-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 1997), pp. 685-694.

[36] For example ʿAlī al-Qaḍībī of Bahrain, a Shīʿite who became a Sunnī and wrote a book entitled *Rabiḥtu l-ṣaḥāba, lam akhsar āl al-bayt* ("I Gained the Companions without Losing the Prophet's Family", 1983). The book's title tells us that his conversion enabled him to combine love of the Prophet's Companions with admiration for his family, in the manner of Sunnīs everywhere. For more details see Shiḥāda, *al-Mushkila al-shīʿiyya*, p. 103.

[37] Shiḥāda, *al-Mushkila al-shīʿiyya*, p. 102.

Books Which Influenced the *mustabṣirūn* and Contributed to their Conversion

A number of books which converts read before their conversion had an effect on their decision to adopt the Shīʿite creed. The most prominent of these is Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥasan Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī's *al-Murājaʿāt* ("Reviews"), which convinced numerous *mustabṣirūn* of the worthiness of the Prophet's family. Thus al-Tījānī al-Samāwī says of this book: "I read al-Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī's book *al-Murājaʿāt*. After a few pages I felt irresistibly drawn to it, and did not leave it except when necessity called." Elsewhere he writes: "The book's honest presentation of the Shīʿite world surprised me. I found in it the object of my desire, since it is not like those books in which the author writes what he wants, with no one opposing him or objecting to what he has to say." Al-Tījānī adds: "I went through the book several times. It opened for me horizons which showed me the right path and prepared my heart to love the Prophet's family."[38] According to another convert, Muḥammad Marʿī al-Anṭākī, "every one of our brother Sunnīs should peruse the *al-Murājaʿāt* and other Twelver Shīʿite books. These should be read carefully from beginning to end, for in them they will find convincing arguments."[39]

Other books which have been popular among converts are al-Amīnī's *al-Ghadīr*, al-Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr's *Fadak fī l-tārīkh*, al-Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar's *al-Saqīfa*, as well as books by Jaʿfar Murtaḍā al-ʿĀmilī, al-Sayyid Murtaḍā al-ʿAskarī, al-Sayyid Abū l-Qāsim al-Khūʾī, al-Sayyid al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, al-Shaykh Muḥammad Amīn, and others.

Missionary Activities of the *mustabṣirūn*, Presentation of their Conversion Experience

Following his conversion to Shīʿism a *mustabṣir* will often begin explaining the Shīʿite creed which he has embraced to those around

38) Al-Samāwī, *Thumma htadaytu*, p. 30.
39) Al-Anṭākī, *Li-mādhā khtartu madhhab al-shīʿa*, p. 53.

him. He defends his newly-found faith, responds to criticisms of it, and undertakes to spread it.[40] The dissemination of the Shīʿite faith by *mustabṣirūn* is done in a variety of styles; some prefer a direct, even provocative approach,[41] while others use a softer style in their missionary work.[42]

In the past five years Shīʿite newspapers, journals, and especially Shīʿite websites, in particular those belonging to religious figures of authority, proudly exhibit lists of *mustabṣirūn*, perhaps out of a desire to attract people to the creed. Thus, for example, a website devoted to converts, *www.aqaed.com/mostabser/*, provides its readers with information about the lives of converts, the countries in which they live, their previous religious denomination, books they wrote, as well as eighty-eight complete texts written by *mustabṣirūn* for the purpose of convincing their readers to convert to Twelver Shīʿism. A perusal of the list of converts reveals that they come from a variety of nations, and that most are college graduates, some even with a Ph.D. degree, such as Dr. ʿIṣām al-ʿImād from Yemen, Dr. Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī from Tunisia, and Dr. Muḥammad Bayyūmī Mahrān from Egypt; there are also converts with advanced degrees in religious studies. It would thus appear that the managers of these sites want to demonstrate that the *mustabṣirūn* are not just simple people, but that even highly-educated people trained in the sciences have chosen to convert to Shīʿism after having given the matter very serious thought.

A number of converts have written about their experience in order to make others aware of the evidence which convinced them to change their religious loyalties. According to ʿAlāʾ al-Ḥassūn[43] converts gave the following reasons for their decision to write about their experience:

A. Some reported that they were approached by people who wanted them to explain the reasons for their conversion. A number of books

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40) Al-Mutawakkil, *Wa-dakhalnā l-tashayyuʿ sujjadan*, pp. 69f.

41) For example, the converts Ḥasan Shiḥāda and Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī; for more details see al-Ḥassūn, *al-Taḥawwul al-madhhabī*, pp. 286f.

42) For example, Muḥammad al-Tījānī al-Samāwī and Idrīs al-Ḥusaynī; see al-Ḥassūn, ibid.

43) Al-Ḥassūn, *al-Taḥawwul al-madhhabī*, p. 297.

resulted from this, in which converts explained their actions, and also added some biographical details about themselves.

B. Some writers declared their desire to promote Islamic unity and give it a firm foundation.[44]
C. The converts' experiences could serve to provide answers to perplexing questions.
D. Their reports might stimulate interest in and sympathy for Shīʿism among other Muslims.[45]
E. Writing for posterity.[46]
F. Presentation of the Shīʿite truth and its oppression by fanatics.[47]
G. A desire to convince Muslims to convert to the "true religion" (i.e. Shīʿism) without fanaticism.[48]

In addition to an account of the reasons which convinced them of the truth of Shīʿism and led to their conversion, the converts also mention the Shīʿite personalities which had the greatest influence on their decision. Some also give accounts of the reactions to their conversion among their acquaintances, and how they remained steadfast in their new faith despite the pressures and difficulties they had to face.

Research on this topic revealed 114 books by converts from many countries, whose full texts can be found on the afore-mentioned website. Here we can mention only a few of these: *Akhīran ashraqat al-rūḥ* by the Syrian Lamyāʾ Ḥamūda; *Intiṣār al-ḥaqq* by the Yemeni ʿIṣām al-ʿImād; *Bi-nūr Fāṭima htadaytu* by the Sudanese Munʿim Ḥasan; *Sabīl al-mustabṣirīn al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm wa-safīnat al-nājīn* by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī; *Shāṭiʾ al-ḥaqq* by the Lebanese Muḥammad Jān Wahbī Abū Jawda; *Li-mādhā khtartu madhhab al-shīʿa ahl al-bayt* by the Syrian Muḥammad Marʿī al-Anṭākī; *Wa-staqarra bī l-nawā* by the Yemeni Muḥammad b. Ḥamūd; *Min al-ḥiwār iktashaftu l-ḥaqīqa* by

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44) Al-Samāwī, *Li-akūna maʿa l-ṣādiqīn*, p. 7.
45) Al-Wardānī, *al-Khidʿa .. riḥlatī maʿa l-sunna ilā l-shīʿa*, p. 186.
46) Ḥasan, *Bi-nūr Fāṭima htadaytu*, p. 7.
47) Qāsim Asʿad Waḥīd, *Ḥaqīqat al-shīʿa al-ithnay ʿashariyya* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Maʿārif al-Islāmiyya, 1421/2000), p. 16.
48) Idrīs al-Ḥusaynī, *Hākadhā ʿaraftu l-shīʿa .. tawḍīḥāt wa-rudūd* (Beirut: Dār al-Nakhīl al-ʿArabī li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1418/1997), p. 7.

the Syrian Hishām Āl Quṭayṭ; *Wa-min al-nihāya kānat al-bidāya* by the Palestinian Bāsil Muḥammad al-Khaḍrāʾ; and *Wa-rakibtu l-safīna* by the Jordanian Marwān Khalifat.

Interestingly enough, most of the writings by converts shun any discussion of controversial issues on which Shīʿites and Sunnīs are divided, such as the imamate, dissimulation and the Qurʾān, and the attitude towards the Prophet's Companions, especially Abū Bakr and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.

There are websites devoted to the assistance of converts and to their protection from critics. Thus, for example, the Center for Doctrinal Studies under Fāris al-Ḥassūn disseminates Shīʿite books for free over the internet to every *mustabṣir*. The Center runs a program called "The *mustabṣirūn* speak to you", consisting of hundreds of recorded lectures by converts about the reasons for their conversion. Lately the Center has begun disseminating audio and video cassettes and CDs with biographical details about a thousand converts from different parts of the world who have written about their experience.

Factors Contributing to Conversion

Most if not all *mustabṣirūn* converted because they gained an inner conviction that Shīʿism is the true faith. The tendency to convert, however, has received support from the outside as well.

A. Iranian Cultural Chancelleries, Especially in the Countries of the Middle East

Sunnī's have accused the Iranian cultural chancelleries in numerous Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Lebanon and Sudan of acting to disseminate the Shīʿite creed instead of restricting themselves to cultural activities. These chancelleries are in fact run by the office of the Islamic Republic's Supreme Guide ʿAlī Khāminaʾī in Teheran, although they are ostensibly merely attaché offices in Iranian embassies.

In fact, the Iranian government has been spending large sums for the dissemination of Shīʿism and for the support of Shīʿite missionaries and activists. Thus in the year 2003 it allocated about 215,620 billion

Iranian riyals (about 2.3 billion dollars), a budget which was increased seven-fold in 2004.[49]

In a press release which appeared on 31 October 2006 on the Middle Eastern news website of the Arab Orient Center in London, the prominent Syrian Islamic jurist and thinker Dr. Wahba al-Zuḥaylī noted that the Iranian cultural chancellery uses material enticements, in the form of cash, houses and cars, to convince people to embrace Shīʿism, and that "hundreds of Syrians from Dayr al-Zawr, al-Raqqa, Darʿā and the Ghūṭa region near Damascus have already given in to the Iranian chancellery's enticements and converted to Shīʿism". The overseer of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria ʿAlī Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Bayānūnī stated to the Quds Press news agency that "the whole Shīʿite conversion movement in Syria is nothing but an attempt to arouse confusion in order to modify Syria's social structure".

Syria's "breakaway" vice president ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Khaddām has criticized the Iranian ambassador in Damascus in the press and in announcements made by the oppositional Front for National Salvation. He accused him of fomenting conversion to Shīʿism in Syria and of promoting the interests of converts there. Khaddām added: "The Iranian ambassador in Damascus travels throughout Syria with greater freedom than the Prime Minister."[50] In an interview to UPI Khaddām claimed that the Iranian ambassador exploits the fact that there are so many poor people in the country:

> He comes to a region and says that the Prophet's Companion so-and-so passed through here and we must build a shrine. So he builds a shrine and a *ḥawza* and distributes funds to some of the poor. His objective is to build an Iranian party inside Syria, by way of what may be called conversion to Shīʿism.

Observers have noted how the close ties between Iran and Syria, and the strategic alliance between the two which has existed since 1980, have enabled Iran to be active in Syria. The events and receptions which the chancellery in Damascus holds on Iranian national holidays such

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49) Shiḥāda, *al-Mushkila al-shīʿiyya*, p. 16.

50) Ubayy Ḥasan, "ʿAn al-tasannun wa-l-tashayyuʿ fī Sūriyā: radd ʿalā l-wahhābiyyīn wa-man yaḥdhū ḥadhwahum", *www. Aljaml.com/node/11387* (accessed 27 February 2009).

as the annual celebration of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and on religious occasions such as the anniversary of the death of al-Ḥusayn on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, are attended by high-level Syrian and Iranian officials.[51] Iran also encourages Iranian pilgrims to come and visit the shrine of Lady Zaynab in Damascus. The number of such pilgrims has risen from 27,000 in 1978 to 202,000 in 2003. This has equally increased Iranian influence in Syria[52] and promoted conversion to Shīʿism.

B. The Lebanon War in the Summer of 2006 and the Wave of Admiration for Ḥizbullāh Leader Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh

The Second Lebanon War in 2006 generated a wave of admiration for Ḥizbullāh's leader Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh, and his organization's popular image in the wake of its role in fighting against Israel has engendered sympathy towards Shīʿites in the Islamic world in general and brought an increase in the conversion of Sunnīs to Shīʿism in a number of Arab and other Muslim countries. Iranian influence has also increased, following what has been called Ḥizbullāh's "achievements" and its "victory" in the war. Thus the young Syrian Shīʿite cleric Muṣṭafā al-Sāda, reports that many Sunnīs come to Shīʿite religious institutions and ask about the possibility of conversion: "George Bush has done us a great service by uniting the Arabs", he says. Al-Sāda adds that he knows seventy-five Sunnīs in Damascus who have converted to Shīʿism since the beginning of the hostilities in Lebanon in mid-July of 2006. The war, so he explains, has given a boost to conversion to Shīʿism in recent years. From another perspective, we have the testimony of the Syrian Wāʾil Khalīl, twenty-one-years-old, a student of international law at Damascus University: "For the first time in my life I saw a war in which the Arabs were victorious." Khalīl, a Sunnī, began to observe Shīʿite customs and rites and plans a full conversion to Shīʿism.[53]

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51) "Al-Tashayyuʿ fī Sūriyā: jihāt mukhtalifa tuḥāwil nashr al-tashayyuʿ bayna l-kurd fī Sūriyā", *www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh019.htm* (accessed 27 February 2009).

52) Muḥammad al-Ḥasnāwī, "al-Nufūdh al-īrānī fī Sūriyā", 13 October 2005, *www.arraee.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=6680* (accessed 27 February 2009).

53) Allan Nickmeyer, "Mawjat taḥawwul min al-madhhab al-sunnī ilā l-shīʿī fī sūriyyā, bi-sabab al-iʿjāb bi-Naṣr Allāh", 19 November 2007, *www.m-alhuda.com/showthread.php?t=665* (accessed 27 February 2009). See also Aḥmad al-Ayyūbī, "al-Ikhtirāq al-īrānī

Ever since the war the pictures of Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh and Khāmina'ī are more commonly seen on the streets of Damascus than those of the region's political leaders. Pictures in which Syrian President Bashshār al-Asad appears together with Ḥizbullāh's Secretary General Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh can be seen on the city's shop windows, cars, busses, even building walls. Syrian intellectuals claim that this is a manifestation of nationalist rather than religious or denominational feeling;[54] they consider Naṣr Allāh as a national, not a religious or sectarian, symbol.[55] It would thus appear that the pro-Shīʿite sympathies of this group are a passing fad, more in the nature of a show of emotional excitement than a religious conversion based on firm belief.[56]

C. The Impact of the Iranian Revolution

For several years, the numbers of Sunnī converts to Shīʿism—or at least of those who made their conversion public—remained rather limited and their books presumably reached only a limited audience. Things changed, however, thoroughly after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which led to a distinct polarization of the relation between Sunnism and Shīʿism in nearly every regard.[57]

D. The War in Iraq and the Shīʿite Takeover after 2003

This event not only led to growing Iranian influence in the region but also spilled hundreds of thousands of refugees into the neighbouring countries, many of them Shīʿite.[58]

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li-l-ʿālam al-ʿarabī: ḥaqīqa wa-arqām abʿād wa-dalālāt", 19 November 2007, *www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh012.htm* (accessed 27 February 2009).

54) "'Ulamā' dīn yanfūna nashr al-tashayyuʿ al-īrānī fī Sūriyā", *al-ʿArabiyya*, 19 November 2007, *www.aljaml.com/node/9168* (accessed 27 February 2009).

55) See, for example, what the Syrian researcher Nabīl Fayyāḍ has to say on the minorities issue in *al-ʿArabiyya*, ibid.

56) "Al-Shīʿa fī Sūriyā: ḥuqūq dīniyya muṣāna fī mujtamaʿ muṣādar", *www.arabic.cnn.com/2007/middle_east/4/2/shiite.syria/index.html* (accessed 27 February 2009).

57) For more details see: Rainer Brunner, "'Then I Was Guided'. Some Remarks on Inner-Islamic Conversions in the 20th and 21st Centuries", in *Orient* 4 (2009), p. 10.

58) Ibid, p. 12.

E. Political Backing of Shīʿite Missionaries in some Countries

Some countries, Syria for example, provide political encouragement to Shīʿite missionaries and facilitate their activities. Thus at the beginning of the 2006/2007 school year the Shīʿites in Syria were permitted to open a religious school in the city of al-Ṭabaqa in which more than two-hundred students were enrolled. They were able to obtain a government license to open the school, despite the fact that in the whole country there are only two schools for Sunnī jurisprudence, one in Damascus and the other in Aleppo, and the latter only obtained permission to open in 2007, after decades of attempts. The afore-mentioned Shīʿite school is not the only one of its kind in Syria; another opened recently in Idlib. Rumor has it of late that Iran has obtained permission from the Syrian authorities to establish a large Iranian university in Syria, with all faculties.[59]

F. Academic Enticements

Iran provides academic enticements to converts in the form of scholarships to universities and the *ḥawza*s of Qumm and Teheran, including for advanced studies. Students pay no tuition fees and are given a monthly stipend.

G. Economic Enticements

Shīʿite missionaries are not averse to paying money to converts, or to provide occasional assistance in commercial of official matters. In Syria, for example, Shīʿite missionaries focus on tribal leaders, especially in the al-Jazīra region which borders on Iraq, in order to gain control over the subjects of these leaders. They provide encouragement to new converts by marrying them, or providing them with a temporary wife, as well as with basic consumer goods such as oil, sugar and rice, in addition to a grant of 2,500 Syrian pounds to any convert who names his son Ḥasan or Ḥusayn, especially in the Idlib region. Every girl named Zaynab is given a present, and university students named ʿAlī are paid special attention. Other enticements include loans to the poor under

59) ʿAbd al-Satīr Āl Ḥusayn, *Taḥdhīr al-barriyya min nashāṭ al-shīʿa fī Sūriyā* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqalayn, 2007), p. 66.

the guise of Muslim solidarity, loans which do not have to be repaid; free visits to Iran for tribal leaders, especially in the al-Raqqa region, at the invitation of the Iranian ambassador to Syria; and similar invitations to Syrian notables, such as the teachers at the schools of religious jurisprudence. One of these journeys was of a group of tribal *shaykh*s led by Ḥamīd al-Jarbā, head of the Shamr tribe; among the other participants were Fayṣal al-ʿArīf, leader of the Khafāja tribe, and ʿAwwād al-ʿAwāmila, leader of the al-Wahab tribe from the village of al-Buwayhij. The participants in these journeys return loaded with presents and bloated pockets. Yet another form of enticement is free health care for converts in the Iranian charity hospitals in Syria, such as the Imam Khomeini Hospital in Damascus, the Red Crescent Hospital in Aleppo, and the Charity Hospital in Aleppo. Libraries in the guise of bookshops provide yet another form of enticements; they lend and hand out books, and give prizes (of 1,000 Syrian pounds per book) to those who read them.[60]

H. Shīʿite Satellite Television

These play a major role in conversion to Shīʿism in many countries. Since the occupation of Iraq by the Coalition the number of such stations has grown to twenty. They broadcast sermons, Shīʿite stories, pictures, and lectures, for the purpose of disseminating the Shīʿite creed and influencing public opinion. Among the most prominent of these stations are al-Fayḥāʾ,[61] al-Anwār,[62] al-Kawthar,[63] and Ahl al-Bayt.[64] The stations host well-known preachers such as Muḥammad al-Wāʾilī and

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60) Al-Ḥasnāwī, "al-Nufūdh al-īrānī fī Sūriyyā".

61) An Iraqi satellite TV channel which currently broadcasts from ʿAjmān TV. Registered in Dubai, it began broadcasting on 20 July 2004. It employs about forty workers and broadcasts a number of programs in addition to the news. For more details see the station's website on *http://alfayhaa.tv* (accessed 27 February 2009).

62) A Shīʿite satellite channel broadcasting from Kuwait, with a Kuwaiti government license; it broadcasts Shīʿite religious content to subscribers, especially lament poems over Ḥusayn's death in the months of Muḥarram and Ṣafar. For more details see the station's website on *www.alanwartv.com* (accessed 27 February 2009).

63) A Shīʿite station broadcasting from Iran. It began its Arabic-language broadcasts in 1980 as the "Saḥar Satellite Station" for one hour daily; today it broadcasts eighteen hours a day. For more on this station see its website on *www.alkawthar.ir* (accessed 27 February 2009).

64) Its full name is "the Ahl al-Bayt Islamic Satellite Channel", broadcasting from Karbalāʾ since 14 October 2005. For more details see its website on *www.ahlubayt.com* (accessed

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Muhājir. In recent years one station in particular has had a major impact on public opinion; this is Ḥizbullāh's al-Manār.[65] Although it has numerous viewers whose main motivation is the attraction they feel to Ḥizbullāh in the wake of its military confrontation with Israel in 2006, the station provides a distinct Shīʿite perspective.

I. The Role of the Internet in Conversion to Shīʿism

There are literally dozens of websites specializing in Shīʿīte missionary work. The two sites *al-Mustabṣirūn* and *al-Mutaḥawwilūn* contain lists of hundreds of Sunnī converts to Shīʿism who as indicated above have written books about their conversion experience. At the same time, there also exist Sunnī sites in which Shīʿite claims are rebutted, and which present stories of former Shīʿites who have converted to the Sunnī creed. Two such sites are *al-Bayyina* and *al-Rāṣid*.[66]

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we saw that the term *mustabṣir* in the modern Shīʿite usage denotes a convert to Shīʿism, who has become convinced of the truth of the Shīʿite demand for loyalty to the Prophet's family. The word itself, as we have seen, is quite ancient and attested to in the earliest periods of Islam.

We have identified five kinds of motives which, from a Shīʿite point of view, drive people to convert to Shīʿism: the lack of depth of the Sunnī creed, the influence of the imams of the House of the Prophet, encounters with followers of the Shīʿa and belief in its creed, the pow-

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27 February 2009). The station is supported by the Great Ayatollah al-Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim al-Shīrāzī, and the Great Ayatollah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī.

65) A Shīʿite station founded by Ḥizbullāh in 1991. Since 2000 it has been broadcasting via satellite seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It employs hundreds of workers and broadcasts worldwide. For more on this station see Dina Maṭar, "What It Means to Be Shiite in Lebanon: Al-Manar and the Imagined Community of Resistance", in *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 3/2 (2006), pp. 22-40.

66) Muḥammad Abū Rummān, "al-Tashayyuʿ fī l-Urdunn", *al-Ghad* (Jordanian newspaper), 4-5 October 2006.

erful evidence for its truth possessed by the Shīʿa, and the effect of Shīʿite books and the writings of other converts.

Various stages could be noted through which converts pass until they finally change their religious allegiance. The actual process of conversion, we saw, takes place in two phases. At first the prospective convert comes to believe in the idea of the imamate, and in the wrongs which Shīʿism has suffered; then he studies the Shīʿite doctrine and system of religious law.

The *mustabṣirūn*, from the Shīʿite perspective, can be divided into three types: convinced, lost and sneaky ones. Converts to Shīʿism can expect to face various types of harassment and attack from their own relatives and clansmen, as well as from Salafīs, especially through the Internet, where they publish claims that some of the supposed converts do not exist, and that their writings and personalities were fabricated by Shīʿites for the purpose of disseminating their creed. The conversion accounts, on the other hand, equally stress the steadfastness of the converts in the face of the harassment they endure after their conversion.

The study also surveyed websites connected to the *mustabṣirūn*, in which one finds their names and nationality, and the reasons for their conversion which they give in their writings. From the given names and biographies it can be gleaned that most converts are educated and well-versed in religious matters, indicating that conversion was based on their gradual conviction of Shīʿism as the true religion. We also saw that these sites take great pride in the converts. Books also played a role in convincing *mustabṣirūn* to convert to Shīʿism, especially al-Sayyid al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī's *al-Murājaʿāt*. Converts, so we saw, also participate in the dissemination of the Shīʿite creed.

Chief among the other factors which played a role in the increase in the number of converts is the support provided by the Iranian cultural chancelleries in a number of Middle Eastern countries, especially in Syria and Sudan. The Lebanon War of 2006 and the wave of admiration it engendered for Ḥizbullāh's leader Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh is another factor. In addition, there are various enticements which Shīʿite missionaries offer throughout the Middle East, such as financial aid and help in commercial matters. Shīʿite satellite stations and websites were also found to have played a considerable role in providing encouragement to conversion.

To conclude, the terms *mustabṣir* and *istibṣār* have come to possess a very specific meaning in modern times, and describe a well-defined and quite common phenomenon, which has been on the increase of late, especially in a number of countries in the Middle East. However, despite all that has been said above, the number of converts among the population as a whole has remained clearly limited, and the worry expressed by Sunnīs, especially Islamists, is in our opinion overstated and quite baseless, and this is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

PRISON AND PRISONERS IN ISLAM

Khalid Sindawi

ABSTRACT

This articles deals with the issue of prisons in Islam from the beginning of Islam till the Abbasid period. It also deals with the most famous Islamic prisons, the life of the prisoners, and their treatment by their jailors. The article reveals the sanitary conditions of the prisons, and the various ways of torturing the prisoners by the Abbasid Caliphs, who devised different ways to torture their prisoners. The article also makes a comparison between the treatment of the prisoners of war during the days of Muhammad and the treatment of Moslem prisoners. It shows that non-Moslem prisoners of war were treated in a better way than Moslem prisoners.

THE PRISON AT THE BEGINNING OF ISLAM

At the beginning of Islam the concept of 'prison' meant hindering the prisoner and preventing him from controlling his own life and mixing with other people. When the Islamic empire expanded during the reign of caliph Omar Ibn al-Khattab (634-644 AD) and the insertion of new administrative rules and systems, caliph Omar decided to found prisons. Thus, he bought a house from Safwan Ibn 'Umayya al-Jumahi (d. 661 AD) for four thousand dirhams and turned it into a prison in Mecca (1).

Apparently, this house was not a prison in the real sense of the word. It was a place that hinders or confines the movement of the prisoners. In fact, the prison substituted the person's house or the mosque. The first one who built a prison in Islam was Ali Ibn Abu Talib (d. 661AD). Two prisons were built during his period, Nafi' and al-Makhis. During the reign of the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan (661-680 AD), the prisons were organized and provided with guards. One of the most famous prisons in Islam was al-Dimas, which was built by al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf al-Thaqafi (d. 714 AD). This prison had no roof to protect its inmates from the heat of the sun during the summer or rain during the winter (2), and it was called 'al-Dimas' because of its deep darkness and wilderness (3). It was located in the

city of Wasit. Jahdar, the thief who was imprisoned in al-Dimas, said the following lines of poetry:

1) Inna al-layali najat bi fahiya muhsinatun
la shakka fihi mina al-Dimasi wal-‘asadi

2) Wa atlaqatni mina al-assfadi mukhrijatan
min hawli al-sijni shadidi al-ba’asi dhi rasadi

3) Ka’anna sakinahu hayyan hushashatuhu
haithu tarddada minhu al-summu fil jasadi

Translation:

1) The nights helped me to survive the Dimas and the lion, and therefore they did me an undoubted favor
2) They set me free from the manacles, sending out from the horror of the prison the brave and watchful man (i.e. the prisoner)
3) As if its innate (prisoner) resurrected his soul, where the poison moved in his body.

The second famous prison was called ‘Arim. It was a cold and dark prison (5) that was mentioned by Kuthayyir ‘Azza (d. 723 AD), when ‘Abdullah b. al-Zubayr imprisoned al-Hasan b. Muhammed b. al-Hanafiyya. Kuthayyir said the following lines of poetry:

Tuhaddithu man laqayta annaka ‘aa’ithun
Bal al-‘aa’ithu al-mathloomu fi sijni ‘Arim (6)

Translation:

You tell someone who you meet that you need protection, but (in reality) the one who needs protection is the persecuted one in the prison of ‘Arim.

Abdullah b. al-Zubayr imprisoned his brother ‘Amr in this jail, and imprisoned also the poet ‘Abu Sakhr al-Hudhali (d. 700 AD).

The third famous prison was called al-Mitbaq, which was built by the second Abbasid caliph Abu Ja’far al-Mansur (754-775 AD) between the two walls of Baghdad. It was a very wide prison that included subterranean vault and dark cellars (7). Other prisons were mentioned in the resources such as al-Mutraf, where al-Hallaj’s body was burned on its wall after he was crucified in 922 AD (8) ; the new prison in Baghdad (9) , and the prison of Dawwar in Yamam and other places (10).

It seems that some caliphs and leaders used to build prisons in their palaces. For example, caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur built a prison for 'Abdullah b. Ali in his palace (11). Similarly, Sa'd b. Abu Waqqas (d. 675 AD) built a prison in his palace called al-'Udhayb for Abu Mihjan al-Thaqafi (d. 650 AD) (12). Some caliphs were imprisoning others with their servants and girls. For example, caliph al-Mu'tasim (833-842 AD) imprisoned Muhammad b. al-Qassem (d. after 834 AD) with his sevant Masrur (13) in a subterranean vault that was similar to a well, and he nearly died there. When al-Mu'tassim knew about that, he ordered the jailors to take him out and imprison him in Bustan Musa in al-Mu'tassim's house.

It seems that Islamic prisons were not strongly built, well guarded, and watched. Therefore, we read about many attempts to break the locks of the doors or to make holes in the walls. We read also about the escape of many prisoners and even attempts to kill the jailor himself (14).

SUPPORTING AND FEEDING THE PRISONERS

Caliph Ali b. Abu Talib put rules for supporting the prisoners. They say that if the prisoner had money, he should spend it on himself while he is in prison, but if he had no money, Bayt al-Mal (The Treasury of the State) should buy him food, bread, and clothes in summer and in winter (15).

The Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz (717-720 AD) ordered that prisoners should be given support from the charity. Sometimes, the prisoners were going out with their guards (with handcuffed hands) to beg. They were crying in the streets 'Starvation!' 'Starvation!" but jailors were taking most of what the prisoners managed to collect. Those who were not crying or begging were punished more severely by their jailors (16).

Perhaps the first person that put down fixed rules for supporting the prisoners was judge Abu Yusuf Ya'qub b. Ibrahim (d. 798 AD). He did that after caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809 AD) demanded that. He allocated fixed monthly salaries to be paid for the prisoners. He had a registration book for those who deserve such salary. He also allocated payments for clothes, which consisted of a shirt and a cloth in winter and a wide garment in summer. He also added a head veil for women in order to avoid them going out in handcuffs to ask for charity (17).

It seems that salaries were not stable. Harun al-Rashid once asked the jailors: How much did you allocate for Yahya b. ‘Abdullah b. al-Hasan al-Talibi (d. 796 AD). They answered: Four loaves, and eight pounds of water. He decreased that to a half and then to a quarter (18).

According to the sources, the government used to allocate budgets for prisons and prisoners. For example, the Abbasid caliph al-Mu’tadhid-billah (892-902) allocated 1500 dinars from the government budget to be paid monthly for the expenses of prisons and the food for prisoners and their provisions (19).

Reliable and loyal people administered the prisons. Finally, the supervision of the prisons of the state was put in the hands of the judge (20).

THE TREATMENT OF THE PRISONERS

The prisoners used to be handcuffed by different kinds of handcuffs and manacles. Sometimes, an iron link was added to the handcuffs and tied to the back (21). Ali b. Abu Talib (656-661 AD) allowed those who wanted to attend the Friday prayer to do so and return to the prison after the prayer ended (22).

The Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Aziz ordered his governors to allow the Moslem prisoners to be relieved of their handcuffs during the praying time (23). In the year 700 AD, he wrote to his governors ordering them not to handcuff the prisoners (24). The sick and the disabled prisoners were given some sanitary and health care by examining them or giving them medicine and preparing special food for them (25).

It is mentioned that at the beginning of the tenth century, doctors were appointed to take care of the prisoners. They were going into the prisons and giving the prisoners medicine and drinks (26). The prisoners’ parents and friends were allowed to visit their prisoners in distant periods and generally on holidays and feasts. The prisoners were allowed also to read and write. For example, Ibrahim al-Musili learned how to write and read in prison (27).

THE CONDITIONS OF THE PRISONS

The prison rooms were dark, wet, and stinking. One could hear the prisoners’ cries and complaints about starvation, nakedness, lice, darkness, bats, and insects (28).

One day, al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf rode his horse and went out to pray the Friday prayer. He heard some noise and asked: What is this? He was told that the prisoners were making noise and complaining about their plight. He looked in their direction and said: "Begone therein and speak not unto me" (29). Al-Hajjaj was letting the prisoners eat the animals' manure and drink water mixed with salt and ashes (30).

When the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (813-833) heard about the riots of some prisoners in al-Mitbaq, he rode out and went to them and ordered to bring four of them and beheaded them (31).

Thus, we see that the prisoners were facing starvation, nakedness, and threats of death. They were forced to do unpaid labour and work in digging canals and building and other kinds of hard labour. When they finished, they were returned to the prison handcuffed. Some of them were prevented from taking the charity that was given to them by people or by their visitors. Their handcuffs were sometimes doubled. Besides, some of them were thrown into prison without limiting their period of imprisonment. Their food was limited to bread and water. Their dress was only a rough woolen garment called *jib* (a long outer garment with wide sleeves).

The prisoners were tortured in their cells. Special methods of torturing were devised. For example, Muhammed b. 'Abdallah al-Zayyat, the minister of caliph al-Mu'tasim (833-842 AD) invented a wide iron furnace with sharp nails on its edge directed towards its inside, in which he was torturing the 'Keepers of the Register" who were required to pay some money. If the tortured one moves inside the furnace (because of its heat), the iron nails would pierce his body, which would pain them extremely. It is quite ironic that when caliph al-Mutawakkil arrested his minister Muhammed b. 'Abdullah al-Zayyat, he ordered that he be tortured in the furnace for forty days. Finally, he died in it (32).

Al-Hajjaj also invented different methods of torturing in his prison called al-Dimas. The Umayyad poet Jarir b. 'Atiyya al-Khatfi (d. 728 AD) described the ways of torture in al-Dimas when he addressed caliph Suliman b. 'Abdul Malik (715-717 AD) saying:

1) Ajarta mina al-mazalimi kulla nafsin wa 'addayta al-lathi 'ahida la-rasulu

2) Wa yad'uka al-mukallafi b'ada juhdin wa 'aanin qad 'adarra bihi al-kubulu
3) Wa ma zalat mu'alaqatun bi thadyin bi thi al-Dimasi aw rajulun qatilu
4) Farrajta al-hamma wa-alhalaqati 'anhum fa 'ahya al-nasa wa-albalada al-mahulu

Translation:

1) You protected a soul from its grievances, and you fulfilled what the prophet assigned
2) The charged one calls you after an effort and the sufferer calls you after the handcuffs hurt him.
3) The breast or the legs of a murdered man are still hanging in al-Dimas
4) You relieved their oppression and their handcuffs, so you gave life to people and a passing country

Al-Hajjaj ordered to bring Fayruz Husayn, who used to torture the prisoner by tying him to cracked Persian reed and dragging him till the reed tore his body apart. Then he would wet him with salt and vinegar.

This kind of torture is not strange to al-Hajjaj, who was known of his cruelty. Al-Hajjaj used to imprison women and men together. The sources mention that fifty thousand men and thirty thousand women, (of whom sixteen thousand were naked) died in his prisons (34).

We also read that the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tadid (892-902 AD) was well-known for his cruelty with the prisoners. When he got angry with the leader or any man, he would order his men to dig a hole for him in his presence. Then he would hang down his head into the hole to the middle of his body. His other half would appear above the earth, and the prisoner would remain hanging half-covered till his soul went out (35).

Another example of al-Mu'tadhid's torture is that he used to order his men to tie the hands and legs of the prisoner and put an air-pump in his anus and pump air till he inflates and his body gets bigger in size. Then his anus is corked with cotton and a vein is open to bleed. In one

instance, the man became "like a big camel and his eyes were filled and went out of their sockets. When he was about to split, he ordered some doctors and hit him with the sword in two veins above his eyebrows. The wind blew out of them with blood with a whistling sound till the man died" (36).

It should be noted that it was caliph al-Mu'tadhid who started using al-Matamir as a prison. (al-matamir is a subterranean storehouse for grain). There he Practiced all sorts of torturing and he appointed Najah al-Harami in the position of torturing people (37). His practices included all kinds of hitting, head-shaving, pouring boiling oil on the head, plucking beards, moustaches, eyelashes, eyebrows, pulling out nails, and pouring cold water in winter (38).

An interesting example is the case of 'Amr b. al-Zubayr, who was in his brother's jail 'Abdullah b. al-Zubayr. 'Amr was hit by whips and pus was exuding from his back and shoulders on earth. Then there an order was given to put the dung beetle on him, which started moving on his body and piercing his flesh while he was handcuffed till he died. Abdullah b. al-Zubayr was crucified in Mecca, and he was pulled down only after he was strongly hit (39).

It is worthwhile mentioning that some prisoners were defamed among people. For example, the poet Ibn Mufarragh Yazid b. Ziyad (d. 688 AD) was forced by 'Ubaydullah b. Ziyad to drink a sweet drink, but he tied him to a cat and a pig and defamed him in the markets of Basra while children were running around him (40).

Ibn al-Jahm was also hanged in front of people naked for a whole day (41).

The people who were tortured most were those who refused to pay al-Kharaj (land-taxes), but Harun al-Rashid stopped their torturing.

It is related that when caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattab (634-644 AD) was on his way to al-Sham (Damascus), he passed by some people, who were forced to sit under the heat of the sun. Hot oil was being poured on their heads. He asked: "What's the matter with these people?" He was told: "They did not pay al-Jizya (the head tax)." 'Umar said: "What do they say and how do they excuse for that?"

He was told: “They say they do not have’”.
He said: “Set them free” (42).

Abdullah Ibn al-Mu’tazz, known as Ibn al-Mu’tazz (d. 908AD) describes the torturing of those who did not pay al-Kharaj (land-tax) in one of his poems written as ‘Urjuza (a poem in the meter of *rajaz*). Torture was so severe for those who stole money from the State. They were hung from one hand while edges of reed canes were pierced into their nails. They were hit on the head by nailed sticks, and they were forced to dress a woolen *jibba* (wide garment) soaked with oil or foot trotter, especially of sheep or oxen (43). Even caliphs, princes, ministers, and leaders were tortured in this way. The eyes of several Abbasid caliphs were gouged out (43). The tragedy of caliph al-Mu’tazz shows another type of torturing. A number of Turks entered his room and hit him severely with nailed sticks till his clothes were torn and blood flowed down his shoulders. Then they put him in the heat of the sun. When he was deposed, someone was sent to torture him. They did not give him food for three days. Then they plastered a subterranean vault with hot thick gypsum and when it got hotter, they pushed him into it and closed it and soon he turned into ashes (45).

There is another story about al-Mu’tassim and torturing Babak al-Khurrami (d. 837) in Samirra’, which says that al-Mu’tassim ordered to undress Babak completely. The servants stole all his valuable things and ornaments; his right hand was cut and they hit him on the face with the cut hand. Then his left hand was cut and he was hit on the face with it. Then they cut his legs while he was turning on the leather mat on the table of execution. Al-Mu’tassim ordered the executioner to insert the sword between two of his ribs below the heart in order to lengthen his suffering. Then he ordered to cut his tongue and his body was crucified with his limbs. After that, the head was carried to the City of Peace, (Baghdad) and it was put up on the bridge. Then it was moved to Khurasan where they moved with the head from a city to the other.

His brother, Abdullah was carried with the head to the City of Peace. There, Ishaq b. Ibrahim, governor of Madinatu al-Salam (the City of Peace) ordered to do the same thing as was done with his brother Babak

in Samirra'. Babak's body was crucified on a long board of wood at the outskirts of Samirra' (46).

Another example is the story of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861 AD) and his torturing of his minister Ibn al-Zayyat in the furnace.

Thus, we see that a number of caliphs and governors tortured people in a brutal way, and this harmed them in return.

As for prisoners and captives, the treatment was better. It is related that 'Aziz b. 'Umayr was among the captives in the battle of Badr (624 AD). He said: I was among a group of 'Ansar (Supporters of the Prophet) when I was taken as a captive. When they were having lunch or supper, they were giving me bread and were eating dates (47).

One of the sings of good treatment of the prisoners of war was giving them food and clothing. The tribe of Thaqif took into captivity two of the Prophet's companions. The Prophet also took into captivity a man from Banu 'Amir b. Sa'sa'a. The captive said to the Prophet: "I am hungry; give me some food; I am thirsty; give me some water". The Prophet said: "Yes, you need that. Then he exchanged him for the two men that Thaqif had taken into captivity (48).

Another sign of good treatment of prisoners of war is non-torturing, non-hitting, and non-forcing them to reveal the secrets of their armies. It was not allowed to maim their bodies by cutting their limbs or gauging out their eyes after arresting them. However, it was allowed to mutilate a non-Moslem captive if a Moslem one was maimed by the people of a non-Moslem one (49).

Prophet Muhammad, for example, prevented pulling out the front teeth of Suhail b. 'Umar (d. 639), the public speaker of Quraysh and one of its lords in Jahiliyya. Suhail was taken into captivity by Moslems in the battle of Badr. 'Umar b. al-Khattab asked the Prophet to let him pull out Suhail's front teeth so that he would not be able to speak against him in public. The Prohpet answered: "I won't maim him; if I do, God will maim me, even if I am a prophet" (50).

Thus, we notice that the prisoners of war who fell into Moslem hands were treated in a better way.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in this article, the use of prisons in Islam started in formal way with the Orthodox Caliphs (al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun) in (632-661 AD), especially with the caliphate of 'Umar b. al-Khattab. In the course of time, many prisons were built. A special order was followed in supporting and feeding the prisoner. As for their treatment, it was quite severe. However, some caliphs were less cruel than others. The conditions of the prisons were quite hard, and we have had many evidences. Non-Moslem prisoners were treated better than Moslem ones.

ملخص

يهدف هذا المقال للوقوف على حالة السجون في الإسلام، منذ بداية الإسلام وحتى العصر العباسي، يتطرق المقال أيضا إلى أشهر السجون الإسلامية، وأوضاع السجناء فيها، وكيفية معاملتهم من قبل السجانين، كما يبين المقال ظروف السجن الصحية، وتعذيب السجناء من قبل بعض الخلفاء العباسيين، الذين ابتكروا طرقا متعددة لتعذيب السجناء، كما يتناول المقال أوضاع الأسرى المساجين في زمن النبي محمد (صلى الله عليه وسلم) ويبين أن معاملتهم كانت معاملة حسنة أفضل من معاملة المساجين المسلمين.

תקציר

המאמר מתאר את בתי הכלא באסלאם מאז תחילת האסלאם ועד התקופה העבאסית, המאמר מתמקד בבתי הכלא המפורסמים, וכן מתאר את אורח חיי האסירים, והיחס כלפיהם מצד הסוהרים, המאמר עומד על התנאים הבריאותיים ששררו בבתי הכלא, וכן על עינוי האסירים ע״י אחדים מהחליפים העבאסים אשר המציאות שיטות מתוחכמות לענוי האסירים. המאמר גם סוקר את מצב השבויים אשר נשבו ע״י המוסלמים בראשית האסלאם, והמאמר הבהיר שהיחס כלפי שבויים אלה היה יחס אנושי.

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'TELL YOUR COUSIN TO PLACE A RING ON HIS RIGHT HAND AND SET IT WITH A CARNELIAN': NOTES ON WEARING THE RING ON THE RIGHT HAND AMONG SHĪʿITES

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Abstract

The article studies the Shīʿite custom of wearing a ring on the right hand and its theological significance. It begins with a survey of ancient and modern writings on the rules of conduct associated with wearing a ring, and then goes on to discuss the reason why Shīʿites wear the ring on their right hand, the material of which the ring is made, the significance of the gemstones set into the ring, the text which was engraved on the rings of the prophets and the Shīʿite imams, and the number of rings worn by Shīʿites. The article concludes with a summary of findings.

Introduction

A ring is a token with special meanings and values.[1] This band worn on the finger has from antiquity been a symbol of authority and of the binding relation between a ruler and his people, the ties between the senior clergy and the deity, and a sign of loyalty and devotion in holy matrimony.

However, it soon took on the characteristics of a piece of jewellery which adorned men and women alike, and also came to serve as a seal, worn in particular by officials. A ring can be just a simple band of metal, or it can have a setting of diamonds, emeralds, rubies, etc. The most ancient rings were of gold, and their inset stones were round or elliptical (in rare cases rectangular). The people of the east from the earliest times put rings on their toes. The wife would put a ring on her left big toe while the husband put it either there as well, or on another toe of the same foot. But most primitive people did

[1] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir al-anāqa fī maʿālim al-khilāfa* (Beirut 1970), 2:232.

not use rings as a decoration for the hand; the ancient Egyptians appear to have been the first to have done so around the sixteenth century BCE probably as a further use of signet rings.

As for the Shīʿites, anyone who looks at the right hand of a Shīʿite cleric[2] or a pious man will see that it bears one or more rings on the little finger and/or the ring finger. These rings are not worn for decoration, but rather in connection with the Shīʿite creed, rings being considered very important signs of faith.[3]

This has motivated the present study of this phenomenon, its roots and whatever else is associated with it. To the best of our knowledge, no previous study exists on the Shīʿite custom of wearing a ring on the right hand, although it is a topic which is frequently discussed in both ancient and modern Shīʿite texts.

Before continuing further, let us review the works in Arabic which deal with the subject of rings.

Texts dealing with Rings

Rings and what pertains to them have been the subject of a number of books in Arabic, most of which have been lost with only their names surviving in other texts. The most important of these works are the following:

Nuqūsh al-khawātim (*Ring Engravings*) by al-Jāḥiẓ[4] (d. 255/868);

Al-Khawātim (*Rings*) by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā[5] (d. 281/894);

[2] In this article the words Shīʿite, Shīʿism and Shīʿa refer to Imāmiyya Shīʿa, who are also called the Twelvers (Ithnā ʿAshariyya).

[3] The Shīʿites define five 'signs of faith': the prayer of the fifty-one, the pilgrimage of the forty (i.e. pilgrimage to the shrine of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī on the 20th of the month of *Ṣafar*), wearing a ring on the right hand, putting soil on the forehead (soil from Karbalā', which one puts on one's forehead at prayer time), and proclaiming 'In the name of Allāh the kind the merciful'. For details see Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* (Tehran n.d.) 6:52 no. 37; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il al-shīʿa* (Qumm n.d.), 5:81 no. 5979, 14:478 no. 19643; al-Mīrzā Ḥasan al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il* (Qumm 1988), 3:287–8 nos 3599–3, 3:290 nos 3604–8; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn* (Qumm 1966), 1:195; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Aḥsā'ī, *ʿAwālī al-la'ālī* (Qumm 1984), 4:37; Muḥammad al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-mazār* (Qumm 1992), 53; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid* (Beirut 1990), 788; idem, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl* (Tehran 1947), 589; Sharaf al-Dīn al-Astar'abādī, *Ta'wīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira* (Qumm 1988), 486; al-Nuʿmān b. Muḥammad Abū Ḥanīfa, *Daʿā'im al-islām* (Cairo 1965), 2:165 no. 591.

[4] ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Bayyāḍī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (Najaf 1964), 3:206.

[5] Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Kitāb aḥkām al-khawātim wa-mā yataʿallaq bihā* (Beirut 1987), 12.

Al-Khawātim (*Rings*) by Ibn Bābawayhi al-Qummī[6] (d. 329/940);

Al-Khawātim (*Rings*) by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, known as Ibn Manjawayhi[7] (d. 428/1036);

Al-Khawātim (*Rings*) by Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī (d. 427/1035);

Al-Takhattum fī al-yamīn wa al-yasār (*Wearing Rings on the Right and Left Hands*) by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1065);

Al-Khawātim (*Rings*) by Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200).

Aḥkām al-khawātim wa-mā yataʿallaqu bihā (*Rules of Rings and Associated Matters*) by Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795/1392). This book deals with the rules of wearing rings in Islam, wearing rings of gold and silver, giving a gold ring as charity, and the gems set into gold and silver rings. In addition, it describes how rings are engraved and the inscriptions in the rings of the Prophet Muḥammad, Moses, Adam, Solomon, the four orthodox caliphs, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, as well as those of the Prophet's companions and adherents. It goes on to discuss the engravings on rings, the rules of wearing the rings on the right and left hand, and various other related issues such as the way the ring should be moved when washing one's hands before prayer or when bathing, removing a ring from the hand of the deceased, leasing a ring, the theft of rings, and so on.

Other works on the subject are ***Faḍl al-ʿaqīq wa al-takhattum*** (*Merits of Carnelian and the Wearing of Rings*) by Quraysh b. al-Subayʿ (or al-Sabīʿ) b. al-Muhannā al-ʿAlawī al-Madanī al-Ḥusaynī;[8] and several others all entitled *al-Khawātim* (*Rings*), by such as Muḥammad b. Wahbān b. Muḥammad,[9] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Daybalī, and Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿĪsā b. Abī Ḥayya.[10]

Various *ḥadīth* collections also have chapters on rings. Thus, for example, al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869) in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* devotes chapters 45–56

[6] Ismāʿīl Bāshā Bābānī, *Īḍāḥ al-maknūn fī al-dhayl ʿalā kashf al-ẓunūn* (Beirut n.d.), 2:293.

[7] Muṣṭafā b. ʿAbd Allāh Ḥājī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa al-funūn* (Beirut 1994), 1:88; Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Aḥkām al-khawātim*, 12.

[8] Among the students who quoted Quraysh are the following: Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1265) and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Hibat Allāh) (d. 656/1258) (see Raḍī al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Amān min akhṭār al-asfār wa al-azmān* [Qumm 1988], 51; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* [Beirut 1984], 41:161 no. 56). One of his teachers was Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. al-Muʿammar (for details see Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha* [Cairo 1967], 9:235).

[9] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī* (Qumm n.d.), 397 no. 1060.

[10] Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist* (Najaf n.d.), 157 no. 695.

of the book on clothes and rings. He discusses gold rings and the prohibition on wearing them, silver rings which are permitted, the gems set into rings, iron rings, engravings, and women's rings.[11] Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888) devotes Book no. 28 in his *Sunan* to rings. It is divided into five chapters. Chapter One contains seven *ḥadīth*s on putting on the ring; Chapter Two on taking the ring off contains one *ḥadīth*; Chapter Three also contains one *ḥadīth*, forbidding the wearing of gold rings; Chapter Four has three *ḥadīth*s on the merits of wearing an iron ring, which, however, should not be worn on the index or middle fingers; and Chapter Five has four *ḥadīth*s on wearing the ring on the right or left hand, the Prophet being reported to have worn his ring on the right hand, while Ibn ʿUmar wore his on his left hand.[12]

Another book in which rings are discussed is *Takhrīj al-dalālāt al-samʿiyya ʿalā mā kāna fī ʿahd rasūl Allāh min al-ḥiraf wa al-ṣanāʾiʿ wa al-ʿamālāt al-sharʿiyya* (*Extraction of Auditory Guidance from the Occupations, Crafts and Payments in the Age of the Messenger of God*) by al-Khuzāʿī (d. 789/1387). There the author discusses the production and use of rings in the Prophet's time. Much of this material was then used by ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Kittānī (d. 1907) in his book *al-Tarātīb al-idāriyya fī al-ḥukūma al-nabawiyya* (*Administrative Arrangements in the Prophet's Government*).[13]

Yet another book which deals with rings and their uses is *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā* (*The Morning of the Night-Blind on the Craft of Composition*) by al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), in which the author reports that the Prophet was told

> 'Kings do not read a letter that is not sealed'. So he took a ring of metal plate and had it engraved with the words 'Muḥammad messenger of God'. After the Prophet died Abū Bakr wore it, then ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb wore it after Abū Bakr, then ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān wore it after ʿUmar, and then it fell into a very deep well.

Al-Qalqashandī adds: 'After that the caliphs wore rings, each with an engraving of his own, and this continued until the caliphate in Baghdad perished'.[14]

[11] Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut 1991), 4:7–8, 67–70, traditions no. 5863–80.

[12] Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Riyadh 1996), 627–9.

[13] See ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Tilmisānī, *Takhrīj al-dalālāt al-samʿiyya ʿalā mā kāna fī ʿahd rasūl Allāh min al-ḥiraf wa al-ṣanāʾiʿ wa al-ʿamālāt al-sharʿiyya* (Cairo 1985).

[14] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā* (Beirut 1987), 3:289.

Thus far we have focused mainly on the medieval literature on rings. There are also a number of modern works on the subject. In his *al-Durr al-thamīn fī al-takhattum bi al-yamīn*[15] (*The Valuable Pearl on Wearing the Ring on the Right Hand*) Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ṭibsī al-Najafī discusses the Shīʿite preference for wearing a ring on the right hand and quotes the *ḥadīth*s which speak about this. He then goes on to describe the preferred gemstone which is set into the ring and the engravings on the rings of the 'fourteen infallibles' (the Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve imams). Another book is *Khawāṣṣ al-aḥjār al-karīma*[16] (*Characteristics of Precious Stones*) by Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Aʿlamī, which opens with a discussion of the Shīʿite preference for wearing a ring on the right hand, goes on to mention the prophets' rings and their engravings, and then describes the features of the precious stones. More recently Muḥsin 'Aqīl published *al-Aḥjār al-karīma: al-takhattum, al-khawāṣṣ, al-nuqūsh* (*Precious Stones: Wearing the Ring, Characteristics, Engravings*),[17] in which he discusses the Shīʿite preference for wearing the ring on the right hand, customs related to wearing the ring, the type of precious stones set into the rings, how the ring is worn and on which finger, engravings on rings, invocations uttered when putting on the ring, and the types of precious stones, their uses and special features.

From this survey of medieval and modern books we can conclude that most dealt with the subject only generally, and only a few discussed it from the perspective of Shīʿite belief, for example the books by al-Ṭibsī, al-Aʿlamī and 'Aqīl. Thus, we may say that there exists a special genre dealing with rings, which we may name 'ring literature'.

Why do Shīʿites wear Rings?

Shīʿites, men and women alike, wear rings in accordance with divine command. They relate on the authority of the Prophet 'that Gabriel descended to the Messenger of God and said: "O Muḥammad, my

[15] Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ṭibsī, *al-Durr al-thamīn fī al-takhattum bi al-yamīn* (Beirut 1992).

[16] Ḍiyā al-Dīn al-Aʿlamī, *Khawāṣṣ al-aḥjār al-karīma* (Beirut 2000).

[17] Muḥsin 'Aqīl, *al-Aḥjār al-karīma: al-takhattum, al-khawāṣṣ, al-nuqūsh* (Beirut 2001). Subsequently the author added more material to the book and published a new edition of it in 2007, consisting of 775 middle-sized pages, under the title *Mawsūʿat al-aḥjār al-karīma al-muṣawwara: al-takhattum, al-nuqūsh, al-khawāṣṣ* (*Encyclopedia of Precious Stones: Wearing the Ring, Engravings, Characteristics*) (Beirut 2007).

Lord extends His greetings to you and tells you to wear your ring, make its stone carnelian, and tell your cousin to wear his ring on his right hand and to make its stone carnelian"'.[18] According to another tradition the angel Gabriel said to the Prophet: 'O Messenger of God, anyone who wears his ring on his right hand out of a desire to emulate your behaviour and whom you then see perplexed on the Day of Resurrection, take him by his hand and bring him to you and to the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib'.[19] The Shīʿites take these two traditions as commands to wear a ring on their right hand, which they perceive as an act of obedience to God, in imitation of the Prophet and his cousin 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

Why do Shīʿites wear their Ring on the Right Hand?

Shīʿites wear their rings on two specific fingers of their right hand, based on a divine command given at an encounter between the Prophet and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Paradise on the Day of Resurrection, as noted above. In yet another tradition, al-Ṣaqʿab b. al-Zubayr[20] is said to have asked the Commander of the Faithful ('Alī b. Abī Ṭālib) about wearing the ring on the right hand, and was given the following answer:

> When God revealed to His Prophet the verse 'And whoso disputeth with thee concerning him after the knowledge which hath come unto thee, say (unto him): come! We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly (to our Lord) and (solemnly) invoke the curse of Allāh upon those who lie,'[21] Gabriel said to the Prophet: 'I am proud of the prophets, of the Prophet's family' … Then Gabriel informed the Prophet: 'Anyone who wears his ring on his right hand out of a desire to emulate your behaviour and whom you then see perplexed on the Day of Resurrection, take him by his hand and bring him to you and to the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib'.[22]

Shīʿite sources state that many prophets wore a ring on their right hand, among them Adam, Idrīs, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Elijah,

[18] Tāj al-Dīn al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār* (Qumm 1984), 133.

[19] Rashīd al-Dīn Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* (Qumm 1959), 3:303; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:290–1 nos 3606–10.

[20] His full name was al-Ṣaqʿab b. al-Zubayr al-Azdī. For more details see ibid., 3:303.

[21] Q 3:62.

[22] al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:290–1 nos 3606–10; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 3:303.

Jacob, David, Solomon, Joseph, Daniel, Joshua, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Jonah, Lot, Hūd, Shuʿayb, Zacharias, Yaḥyā, Ṣāliḥ, ʿUzayr, Job, Luqmān, Jesus and Muḥammad.[23] It would thus appear that the Shīʿites searched for a justification for their custom of wearing a ring on their right hand and found it in a divine command that was obeyed by a number of prophets. In other words, in this way the Shīʿites demonstrate that the members of the Prophet's family are as high in rank as the prophets, and their wearing a ring on their right hand is in accordance with the prophets' custom and the will of God.

Wearing the Ring on the Right Hand in Shīʿite Quranic Exegesis

In *Ta'wīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira* (*Commentary on the Manifest Verses*) it is related that Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī[24] asked the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq about the meaning of the verse 'and of his persuasion verily was Abraham',[25] to which al-Ṣādiq answered:

> When God created Abraham he revealed to him his sight. Abraham saw a light near the Throne and asked: 'My God, what is this light?' and he was answered: 'This light is Muḥammad my sincere friend whom I created'. He then saw a light next to him and asked: 'And what is this light?' and was answered: 'This light is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib the protector of my faith'. He saw three lights next to them and asked: 'My God, what are these lights?' and was answered: 'This light is Fāṭima who extricated her loved ones from the fire, and next to her are al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn'. Abraham then said: 'My God, I see nine lights surrounding them', and he was answered: 'O Abraham, these are the imams who descended from 'Alī and Fāṭima'. Abraham then said: 'My God, will you not also tell me who the nine are?' He was answered: 'O Abraham, the first is 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, then his son Muḥammad, his son 'Alī, his son Jaʿfar, his son Mūsā, his son 'Alī, his son Muḥammad, his son 'Alī, his son al-Ḥasan, and his son the authority to come'. Abraham then said: 'My God and Lord, I see a light which surrounds them in numbers which only you can count'. He was answered: 'O Abraham, these are

[23] Ibid.

[24] His full name was Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī al-Kūfī. He knew the fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir and the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and died during the latter's period of office in 128/745. A number of people transmitted traditions in his name. For more details about Jābir see Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma al-Ḥillī* (Qumm 1963), 35 no. 2; Aḥmad b. Abī ʿAbd Allāh al-Barqī, *Rijāl al-Barqī* (Tehran 1963), 9; Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd* (Tehran 1963), 433 nos 86, 546; Wilferd Madelung, 'Djābir al-Djuʿfī', *EI*[2] Supplement, 232–3; Heinz Halm, 'Das Buch der Schatten. Die Mufaddal-Tradition der Ǧulāt und die Ursprünge des Nusairiertums', *Der Islam*, 55 (1978), 219–66.

[25] Q 37:83.

> their followers, the *shīʿa* of the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib'. Abraham then asked: 'How are his followers to be known?' He was answered: 'By their prayer of fifty-one, the proclamation "In the name of God the kind the merciful", bowing before prostration, and wearing their ring on their right hand'. Abraham then said: 'O God, make me one of the followers of the Commander of the Faithful'. So God wrote in His book 'and of his persuasion (*shīʿa*) verily was Abraham'.[26]

Wearing the Ring on the Right Hand in Shīʿite Poetry

Shīʿite poets mention the custom of wearing the ring on the right hand. For example, Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 74/693 or 77/696) praises the wearing of the ring on the right hand as a special merit which Shīʿites but not Sunnīs possess:

> Wearing the ring on the right hand is the majesty
> Of the wise and the act of every refined person
> Not for the enemies of Shīʿism but only for Aḥmad's adherents (Shīʿites)
> O you who have compared the (Prophet's) inheritor (ʿAlī) with other mortals
> Your mother will lose you.[27]

The poet al-Muṭarraf al-ʿAbdī (d.?) praises wearing the ring on the right hand in imitation of the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, and rebukes the hypocrites who wipe their private parts while wearing a ring inscribed with the names of the Prophet and the Creator:

> They said wear the ring on the right hand, which
> I did in imitation of al-Ṣādiq
> And out of a desire to approach Muḥammad's family
> And to distance myself from all hypocrites
> Who wipe their private parts with rings
> That have the names of the Prophet and the Creator on them.[28]

An unknown poet declares that he wears a ring on the right hand as an adherent of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and one on the left hand in reaction to the 'vile ones' (the Umayyads):

[26] Sharaf al-Dīn al-Astarʾabādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira* (Qumm 1988), 486, whence al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 36:151–2 no. 131, 82:80 no. 20; Abū al-Faḍl ibn Shādhān, *al-Faḍāʾil* (Qumm 1943), 159; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 4:187–8 nos 4452–11.

[27] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 3:303.

[28] Ibid.

I put rings on both of my hands
On my right hand and on the left
On my right hand as a mark of loyalty to ʿAlī
And on my left hand in response to the vile ones.[29]

Yet another poet declares that wearing the ring on the right hand is a mark of those who are faithful to the Prophet's teachings, which Muʿāwiya (d. 14/635) (here mentioned disparagingly as the son of his mother Hind) tried to abolish, helped by ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿĀṣ (d. 43/664):

Muḥammad established the custom of wearing the ring on the right hand
For those who are faithful to his calling
The son of Hind tried to erase his mark
And Ibn al-ʿĀṣ helped him in this.[30]

The Umayyads and Wearing the Ring on the Left Hand

All the Shīʿite sources are agreed that the Prophet wore his ring on his right hand, as did the four orthodox caliphs. In a tradition related by Muḥammad b. Abī ʿUmayr[31] he states that he asked Mūsā b. Jaʿfar if the Commander of the Faithful wore his ring on his right hand. Mūsā replied: 'He does indeed wear the ring on his right hand, because he is the imam of the "companions of the right hand" after the Messenger of God, and God praised the "companions of the right hand" and reproached the "companions of the left hand"'.[32]

It is related that Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680) was the first to have moved the ring to the left hand, and was emulated in this by the general public. Shīʿite sources state that Muʿāwiya did this in

[29] Ibid., 3:403.

[30] Raḍī al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarāʾif fī maʿrifat madhāhib al-ṭawāʾif* (Qumm 1979), 2:533.

[31] Also known as Ziyād b. ʿĪsā with the agnomen Abū Muḥammad or Abū Aḥmad. He was a client of the Azd tribe or, some say, of the Banū Umayya, and was born and lived in Baghdad. He met the seventh imam Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā al-Kāẓim, from whom he heard things, and also reported in the name of the eighth imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 818). He is said to have been trusted by one and all and led an ascetic and pious life. He died in 217/832. For more details see al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl*, 140–1 no. 17; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Qumm n.d.), 365 nos 5413–26.

[32] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 3:303. The 'companions of the right hand' are the Shīʿites themselves, who will go to Paradise and there drink the beverage of the blessed (for details see Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* [Tehran 1946], 1:434; al-Astarʾabādī, *Taʾwīl*, 628, 699, 714, 715, 753; Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī* [Tehran 1989], 513 no. 670, 514 no. 671, 514 no. 672). The 'companions of the left hand' are the enemies of Muḥammad and their adherents (for details see ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī* [Qumm 1984], 2:348).

order to lead the people astray, strip ʿAlī from his position as imam, and harm ʿAlī's followers (the Shīʿites).[33] In another tradition it is said that ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ was the first to have moved his ring from the right to the left hand. This happened during the arbitration at the Battle of Ṣiffīn (37/657).[34] When he took off his ring he is reported to have said: 'I have removed ʿAlī's caliphate as I have removed this ring of mine from my right hand. I have placed it with Muʿāwiya as I have put it on my left hand'.[35] The rings of the caliphs remained on the left hand until the end of the Umayyad period and the beginning of the Abbasids. The first Abbasid caliph, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Saffāḥ (ruled 132–6/750–3) moved the ring to the right hand, where it stayed until the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (ruled 170–93/788–810), who moved it to the left hand again, and others emulated him.[36] The Shīʿites seem to be saying that only they wear their ring on the right hand and that anyone who wears his on the left is an enemy of Shīʿism, such as the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs.

On which Fingers of the Right Hand do Shīʿites wear their Rings?

Shīʿites wear their rings on two fingers of their right hand: the little finger, on which it is a duty to wear a ring, and the ring finger, on which one may also wear a ring. They base this custom on a tradition according to which the Prophet said to ʿAlī: 'O ʿAlī, do not put a ring on your index finger or on your middle finger, for Lot's people wore their rings there; and do not leave your little finger bare'.[37] From this we may conclude that Shīʿism explicitly forbids wearing a ring on the

[33] Al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:290 nos 3605–9; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarāʾif*, 2:532; al-Bayyāḍī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, 3:206.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 3:302–3.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:97 no. 6029. Sunnī jurisprudents agree that it is proper for men to wear their ring on the little finger (see Ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī, *Marātib al-ijmāʿ* [Beirut 1998], 246). According to the Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools of jurisprudence a man may wear his ring on the ring finger, but should not wear it on either the index or middle finger. They base their ruling on a tradition in which ʿAlī is reported as saying: 'The Messenger of God forbade me to wear a ring on this finger and on that one,' and he pointed to his index and middle fingers (Ibn Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-khātim* [book on rings] / *Bāb khātim al-ḥadīd* [chapter on iron rings], 628 no. 4225). The Shāfiʿī school went so far as to declare that wearing a ring on any finger other than the little finger is reprehensible (Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *Tuḥfat al-muḥtāj* [Beirut 1996], 4:328).

middle or index finger, and implicitly permits the wearing of two rings at the same time.[38]

Shīʿite legal experts also demand that the ring be pushed up to the base of the finger and not worn on the tip, as was the custom among Lot's people.[39]

Invocation Said when Putting on the Ring[40]

When putting on the ring on his right hand the Shīʿite repeatedly utters the following invocation: 'O God, mark me with the mark of faith, crown me with the crown of nobility, invest me with the cord of Islam, and do not remove the noose of Islam from my neck'.[41] Perhaps the use of this invocation is based on the Prophet's statement that 'invocation is worship' and 'Alī's declaration 'Whoever invokes God will be answered'. The sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) also related that the Prophet said: 'Invocation is a weapon of the believer, a pillar of religion and a light of heaven and earth'.[42]

As for the invocation's content, we see that it consists of an entreaty to God to give faith to the worshipper. The invoker perceives this as

[38] It is to be noted that among Sunnī jurisprudents there are conflicting views on the wearing of multiple rings. The Mālikī school forbids wearing more than one ring, even if the rings' total weight is no more than two dirhams. Among the Shāfiʿīs there are two different opinions: one absolutely forbids wearing more than one ring, another allows it but finds it reprehensible. For details see Rafīf 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ṣabbāgh, 'Ḥafl al-zafāf fī al-fiqh al-islāmī ḍawābiṭuhu wa-aḥkāmuhu' (MA thesis, Damascus 2004), 249–50.

[39] Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl* (Qumm 1982), 1:258–9; al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 5:85 no. 5989.

[40] It may be worthwhile to note here that Shīʿites use numerous invocations which they pronounce day and night and after every prayer. They are pronounced every hour, or every day, or every week or month, or on one of the many religious occasions. Invocations play an important role in shaping and inculcating Shīʿite culture. Shīʿite sources promise Paradise to those who use these invocations, declare their loyalty to the imams and reject their enemies. In fact, Shīʿite traditions may be said to put more importance on invocations than on good deeds. The scholar Aḥmad al-Kātib argues that Shīʿite propaganda uses these invocations to create a psychological divide between the Shīʿites and the other Muslims. In particular, invocation of the imams after prayer helps to create a religious aura around them and to introduce them into the ideological system. For more details see Aḥmad al-Kātib, *al-Tashayyuʿ al-siyāsī wa al-tashayyuʿ al-dīnī* (Beirut 2009), 203; idem, *al-Sunna wa al-shīʿa* (London 2006), Part II.

[41] Raḍī al-Dīn al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim al-akhlāq* (Qumm 1991), 93; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Amān*, 49.

[42] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2:468 nos 1–7.

a means to gain peace of mind and perhaps a way to obtain more of God's abundance.

Shīʿism would seem to attempt to envelop itself completely around a person's life, so that even putting on a ring is given an invocation of its own. According to Aḥmad al-Kātib this and other Shīʿite invocations play a role in the psychological preparation and religious training of the Shīʿite believers.[43]

When is the Ring taken off?

In view of the great importance and religious significance of wearing a ring Shīʿites take care to keep the place where the ring is worn clean. When performing the ritual ablution before prayer or when purifying oneself from a major ritual impurity a Shīʿite must move his ring three times. If water cannot enter under the ring it must be removed.[44] When cleaning oneself of excrement the ring must be taken off if it has engraved on it such as the name of God, the Prophet, or the imams.

The Metal of which the Ring is Made

Shīʿites attach importance to the material from which the ring is made, the type of stone set into it, and the words and shapes engraved on it. Each of these components has its own rules and specifications.

The preferred material for the ring is silver, not gold,[45] copper or iron,[46] in emulation of the Prophet and the imams, for it related in the name of Abū ʿAbd Allāh (the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq): 'The

[43] For more details see al-Kātib, *al-Tashayyuʿ*, 203, 206.

[44] Al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 1:339–40 no. 782; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ashʿath, *al-Jaʿfariyyāt aw al-ashʿathiyyāt* (Tehran n.d.), 18.

[45] Al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:283–4. Sunnī jurists are all agreed that men are not to wear gold jewellery, whether in the form of a ring, or any other; gold is only permitted to women (see al-Nūrī, *al-Majmūʿ*, 14:291). They also agree that men may wear silver rings, based on a tradition reported by Anas b. Mālik: 'God's Prophet wanted to write to some Persians, but he was told that they would not accept any letter without a seal. So the Prophet took a silver ring, had it engraved with the inscription "Muḥammad Messenger of God", and it was as if I was in the light of the ring on the Prophet's finger or in his hand' (al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, chapter on engraving the ring, 4:2074 no. 5534).

[46] Warrām Fāris al-Ashtarī, *Majmūʿat Warrām* (Qumm 1959), 2:259; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 426; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥdiruhu al-faqīh* (Qumm 1993), 4:10.

Messenger of God said to ʿAlī: "Beware of putting on a ring of gold, for it is your decoration in Paradise"', while in another tradition ʿAlī states: 'The Messenger of God forbade me, and I do not say that he forbade you, to wear a gold ring'.[47] In yet another tradition, the fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732) reports in the name of his forefathers the imams: 'The Messenger of God used to wear a gold ring[48] and suddenly people would stare at him. So he put his hand on his little finger, went back home and cast it away'.[49]

The Form and Type of Gem Set into the Ring and the Merits of Wearing it

Shīʿites prefer a round stone in the ring, in imitation of the Prophet.[50] According to Shīʿite sources there are a number of stones which can be set into a ring, each with its own merits, associated with Shīʿite doctrine and the supposed benefits the stones are said to confer on the believer in his daily life. In this way members of the community are encouraged to wear a ring and thus maintain the customs of their imams.

Carnelian

One stone which enjoys favour among Shīʿites is carnelian,[51] whether red, yellow or white. This is in accordance with the Prophet's injunction: 'Wear rings with a carnelian, for Gabriel brought me one from Paradise and said: "O Muḥammad, wear a ring with a carnelian and tell your nation to do likewise."'[52] It is also related on the authority of the Prophet that a mountain of carnelian was the first to acknowledge God's oneness, the Prophet's prophecy, ʿAlī's legacy and Paradise for the Shīʿites,[53] and that the mountain of carnelian was the place where

[47] Al-Ashtarī, *Majmūʿa*, 2:259; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 426.
[48] Ibid., 86.
[49] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 6:468 no. 4.
[50] Ibid.
[51] The Arabic word for carnelian, *ʿaqīq*, is a native word. It is a transparent, translucent or opaque semi-precious stone made of silicon dioxide. The best stones are mined in Yemen, while a lesser kind comes from India. The best-known and most highly prized type of carnelian is red, but there are also yellow, white and grey stones. It is used in the manufacture of sensitive balances, and frequently also in jewellery. For more details see Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kirbāsī, *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-ḥusayniyya, tārīkh al-marāqid*, Part IV (no place 2007), 210–11.
[52] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 87.
[53] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 87 no. 5998.

God spoke to the prophet Moses.[54] In yet another tradition the Prophet is reported to have said to ʿAlī: 'If you wear a ring set with a carnelian you shall be one of the close companions'. ʿAlī asked him who these 'close companions' were and the Prophet answered: 'Gabriel and Michael', and told ʿAlī to choose a red carnelian.[55] A tradition related by al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī states that God created carnelian out of the light of His face and swore that no hand which wore it would suffer and that its owner would be protected by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[56]

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq also praised the merits of carnelian, 'which increases the assets of whoever wears a ring set with it, increases his children and gives him his livelihood in plenty. He should engrave the following on the ring: "What God wills. There is no strength but in God. If you see me with less money and fewer children and people, ask your God for forgiveness, for He is forgiving"'.[57]

Among the many merits ascribed to carnelian are the following: it never decays;[58] God stamps it with faith;[59] it never sees anything reprehensible; it protects; it offers sanctuary during a journey;[60] God's eye protects the wearer who will only die a natural death; a prayer of two *rukʿa*s (bending and two prostrations) by someone wearing a carnelian ring is worth one thousand *rukʿa*s without such a ring;[61] a hand raised to God wearing a carnelian ring is the kind of hand which is most beloved by God;[62] it prevents poverty and great expenses and is blessed;[63] and it meets the needs of those who wear it.[64]

The fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir is reported to have said to his son Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq:

> My son, whoever wakes up in the morning wearing a ring with a carnelian on his right hand before anyone else rises, turns the carnelian into the inside of his hand and recites: 'We have revealed it in the night of fate…' to the end of the verse, and then says 'I believe in God alone,

[54] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 87.

[55] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 134; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 3:301.

[56] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 134; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:295.

[57] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 134. The first part of the inscription is taken from Q 39:18: 'Though thou seest me as less than thee in wealth and children'.

[58] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-aʿmāl* (Qumm 1985), 174; al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 134; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:90 no. 6008.

[59] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 87.

[60] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Amān*, 1988, 52; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3: 296; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:90 no. 6007.

[61] Ibid., 5:91 no. 6012.

[62] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 134.

[63] Abū Ḥanīfa, *Daʿāʾim*, 2:164.

[64] See ibid., 2:164–5 no. 590.

> who has no associate, and I deny false gods and believe in the secret of Muḥammad's family, their overt and covert aspects, the first among them and the last', God will protect him on that day from any evil that comes from heaven or from earth. He will not be in need and he will be under the protection of God and His friend, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, until evening.[65]

Sulaymān al-Aʿmash[66] relates in another tradition:

> I was with Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad at the door of my father Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr when a man who had been whipped came out. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad said to me: 'Sulaymān, see what stone is set into his ring'. I said to him: 'O son of the Messenger of God, his stone is not carnelian'. He then said: 'Sulaymān, if it had been carnelian he would not have been whipped'. I said: 'O son of the Messenger of God, tell me more'. He said: 'It protects against cutting off the hand'. I said: 'O son of the Messenger of God, tell me more'. He said: 'It protects your blood from being spilled'. I said: 'Tell me more'. He said: 'God likes to have a hand with a carnelian ring raised up to him in supplication'. I said: 'Tell me more'. He said: 'It is a wonderful thing about a hand with a carnelian set in its ring: it is never empty of dinars and dirhams'. I said: 'Tell me more'. He said: 'It is protection against decay'. I said: 'Tell me more'. He said: 'It protects from poverty'. I said: 'Is this something reported in the name of your grandfather al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the Commander of the Faithful?' He said: 'Yes'.[67]

The main message of this tradition is that if the whipped man had been a Shīʿite wearing a ring with a carnelian he would have been protected from the acts of a despotic ruler. In another tradition ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qaṣīr reports: 'The governor summoned a man from the family of Abū Ṭālib. The man went to Abū ʿAbd Allāh (Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq), who said: "Give him a ring set with a carnelian." He wore the ring and no harm came to him.'[68]

[65] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Amān*, 52; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-gharī* (Qumm 1984), 86–7.

[66] His full name was Sulaymān b. Mihrān Abū Muḥammad al-Aʿmash al-Kūfī, a client of the Banū Kāhil. He was born in Kufa in the year 61/680 and died in 148/765. He was a follower of Anas b. Mālik but did not report any traditions in his name. He was an expert on the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth* and religious duties. He transmitted about 1300 *ḥadīth*s and met Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj, and Ḥafṣ b. Ghiyāth. For more details on Sulaymān see ʿAbd b. Muḥammad al-Māmaqānī, *Kitāb tanqīḥ al-maqāl fī aḥwāl al-rijāl* (no place 1349–52/1930–4), 2:65; Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge 2000), 84; Etan Kolhberg, 'Aʿmaš', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London 1985), 1:926–8.

[67] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il*, 5:91 no. 6031; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 89.

[68] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 134; al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 174.

Turquoise[69]

Carnelian is not the only approved stone for use in rings. Another is turquoise, whose use Shīʿites explain as a custom going back to the Prophet and the imams. Thus al-Ḥasan b. Mihrān[70] (according to another version, al-Ḥasan b. Mahziyār) relates that he once entered into the presence of the seventh imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799), who wore a ring on his finger set with a turquoise and with the inscription 'God is the king'. He stared at the ring a long time, and when the imam asked him why he answered:

> I was told that 'Alī the Commander of the Faithful possessed a ring set with a turquoise and inscribed with 'God is the king'. The imam asked: 'Have you ever seen it?' 'No', he answered. The imam said: 'This is the ring. Do you know its history?' 'No', he replied. The imam said: 'This is a stone which Gabriel gave to the Messenger of God, who in turn gave it to the Commander of the Faithful. Do you know what it is called?' He said: '*Fayrūzaj* [turquoise]'. The imam said: 'That is the name in Persian. What is it called in Arabic?' 'I don't know', he replied. The imam said: 'It is *ẓafr*'.[71]

Among the many merits which Shīʿite sources ascribe to a turquoise ring are the following: it protects from scorpion, snake and tarantula bites;[72] its wearer will not become poor;[73] God will not return empty a hand with such a ring raised in supplication;[74] and an infertile person wearing a ring set with a turquoise will be cured and have children. In this latter context a Shīʿite tradition relates that 'Alī

[69] Turquoise (*fayrūzaj* in Arabic, a loanword from Persian) is a semi-precious mineral, sky-blue to bluish-green in colour. It consists of a hydrous phosphate with some copper and iron. It is found in the form of veins in the mountains of Nishapur in Iran, in the Sinai Peninsula, the United States, North Africa, Siberia and Australia. The stones of highest quality are mined in Nishapur. For more details see al-Kirbāsī, *Dā'ira*, 211.

[70] His full name was al-Ḥasan b. Mihrān b. Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr al-Sakūnī. He transmitted traditions in the name of Abū al-Ḥasan and the eighth imam 'Alī al-Riḍā, and wrote a book on Moses. For more details see al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 183 nos 2212–69, 335 nos 4980–11, 355 nos 5260–21; al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl*, 216 no. 7; al-Barqī, *Rijāl*, 49; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī, *Rijāl Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī* (Qumm 1944), 2:202; Ibn Dāwūd, *Rijāl*, 446 no. 149.

[71] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 6:472 no. 2; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 89; al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 175; al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135; al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 5:94 no. 6020.

[72] Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī al-Kafʿamī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Kafʿamī* (Qumm 1984), 224.

[73] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 6:472 no. 1; al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 5:94–5 nos 6021–2; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 89; al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 175; al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135.

[74] Al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 5:95 no. 6024.

b. Muḥammad al-Ṣayramī the scribe[75] told the eighth imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818) that he had no children. The imam smiled and told him to take a ring set with a turquoise and inscribe it with ʿLord, do not cast me away alone, for you are the best inheritor.ʾ Within less than a year a son was born to him.[76]

Chinese Iron

According to Shīʿite sources a man wearing a ring set with Chinese iron will have his needs met, will not fear, and will cause his wife to give birth with no difficulty. The stone is also said to prevent eye injuries, and strengthen the heart.

A tradition relates that a man came to the imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and said to him: ʿI am afraid when I travel to and from al-Jazīra. I fear that my enemies will identify me.ʾ The imam replied:

> Use a ring set with Chinese iron, with the following three lines inscribed on the front: ʿI take refuge in God's majesty', ʿI take refuge in God's words' and ʿI take refuge in God's Messenger'. Inside [under the stone] inscribe two lines: ʿI believe in God and His book, I testify that no god but Allāh is the saviour' and ʿI trust God and His messengers'. Wear it whenever you are in difficulties and your needs will be met and your fear will disappear. Hang it on a woman who has difficulty in childbirth and she will give birth God willing. It also helps cure an afflicted eye. Keep it away from impurity and offensive smells, do not wear it in the bath or the toilet. Protect it, for it is a secret of God.[77]

According to another tradition Abū ʿAbd Allāh (the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq) said:

> Whoever wears such a ring when encountering evil, the evil will be extinguished. It also drives away evil spirits.[78] Whoever wears it and looks at it, God will consider each look as worth a pilgrimage, and its recompense is that of the prophets and the saints. Were it not that God had mercy on the Shīʿites, the stone would be priceless, but God made it inexpensive so that rich and poor could wear it. It is found in al-Dhakawāt al-Bīḍ in al-Ghariyyayn.[79]

[75] I have not found any mention of him in Shīʿite collections of biographies.

[76] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:95 no. 6023.

[77] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Amān*, 50–1.

[78] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 91; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-gharī*, 86–7; al-Fattāl, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*, 2:411.

[79] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135. Al-Dhakawāt al-Bīḍ is a region behind Najaf consisting of three hills in Arḍ al-Gharī, where the *khalwa* of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was located. Shīʿites believe that this will also be the future place of the

Shīʿite writers urge believers to hide the merits of this stone from their enemies so that the latter may not benefit from them, and to disclose them only to those whom they trust.

Ruby

If one has a ruby[80] or a sapphire set into his ring he will not know poverty,[81] and will be lucky and blessed. Whenever a man looks at it he will have more light, and prayer with it is worth seventy-fold.[82]

Emerald

An emerald[83] on the ring also avoids poverty.[84] Whoever has this will escape the wiles of the devils,[85] and one prayer is worth seventy. Such a ring can be used when reciting 'praise be to God' or when using the formula asking God for forgiveness; its owner will have recompense for this.[86]

Mahdī's *khalwa* after he reappears, and that it is the burial place of Adam, Noah and ʿAlī. For more details see Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Farḥat al-gharī*, 117; Abū al-Qāsim Ibn Qūlawayhi, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* (Najaf 1937), 35–6; al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak*, 10:219 no. 11905; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 97:244 no. 28. For more on Ghariyyayn see Khālid Sindāwī, 'Bayna Ghariyyay al-Kūfa wa-qabr ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib fī al-adab al-shīʿī' ('Between the Ghariyyayn of Kufa and the Tomb of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in Shīʿite Literature'), *al-Karmil* (Haifa University 2002–3), 23–4: 111–52.

[80] The Arabic word *yāqūt* (ruby) is a loanword from Greek. *Yāqūt* is a hard, transparent precious stone, and is considered one of the most valuable gems. It comes in four colours: red, yellow, blue and white. The most highly valued colour is red, called corundum in English. It is found in the mountains of India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Australia and Montana. It is said to have medicinal value, and kings and sultans used it to decorate their crowns. For details see al-Kirbāsī, *Dāʾira*, 213–14.

[81] Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 6:471 no. 4; al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Aʿlām al-dīn* (Qumm 1987), 393; al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 176; al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 87, 89.

[82] Abū Ḥanīfa, *Daʿāʾim*, 2:164–5 no. 591.

[83] The Arabic word for emerald (*zumurrud*) is of Persian origin. It is a transparent, deep green metallic gemstone. The stronger the stone's green shade, the purer and more valuable it is. The most precious type is called beryl. It is found in marble and in the mountains. It is mined in Egypt, the United States, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and a number of African countries. In the United States artificial emeralds have been produced since 1946. It has uses in science and medicine. For more details see al-Kirbāsī, *Dāʾira*, 210.

[84] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 87, 89; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:92–3 nos 6015–18.

[85] Al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 176; al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 6:372 no. 1.

[86] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:98 no. 6026.

Crystal Glass

Crystal glass is also viewed with favour. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is quoted as saying: ʿCrystal is an excellent ring stone.ʾ[87]

Engraving the Ring

Engravings on the Rings of the Imams and Prophets

As we have seen, Shīʿism represents the wearing of rings on the right hand as a continuation and imitation of the custom followed by the twelve imams and the prophets. It claims that all the prophets wore rings on their right hand and that the engraving on their rings played a role in their mission. In this way the Shīʿites express their claim to be recognized as a legitimate religious sect with roots in the far past;[88] they also demonstrate the connection between the Shīʿite imams and the prophets of the past, a connection which reveals that the imams are in fact the prophets' successors and continue their mission.

Adam, for example, wore a ring on his right hand on which the following inscription was engraved: *Lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* ('There is no God but Allāh, Muḥammad is God's messenger').[89] He kept the ring after the fall as well. According to some sources, the inscription also included the sentence *ʿAlī walī Allāh* ('Alī is the viceregent of God').[90] Noah's ring had the inscription *Lā ilāha illā Allāh alf marra, yā rabb aṣliḥnī* ('There is no God but Allāh a thousand times. O Lord bring me success'), while Abraham's ring is said to have had inscribed in it *Lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illā bi'l-Lāh fawwaḍtu amrī li-Lāh asnadtu ẓahrī ilā Allāh ḥasabī Allāh* ('There is no god but Allāh, Muḥammad is God's messenger, there is no strength nor power except through God, I place my fate in God's hands, I lean with my back on God, God is sufficient for me'). According to the Shīʿite sources God himself revealed this formula to Abraham and told him to put it on his ring. This ring turned fire into ice when Abraham's enemies tried to burn

[87] Ibid., 5:97 no. 6027; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 89; al-Daylamī, *Aʿlām al-dīn*, 394; al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 176; al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135; Abū Ḥanīfa, *Daʿāʾim*, 2:164 no. 590, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *ʿUddat al-dāʿī* (Qumm 1987), 130; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 6:472 no. 2.

[88] For more on the links which Shīʿism claims to have with the far past in order to prove its legitimacy see Etan Kohlberg, 'Some Shīʾi views of the Antediluvian World', *Studia Islamica*, 52 (1980), 41–66.

[89] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:102; al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 89.

[90] ʿAqīl, *Mawsūʿa*, 47.

him. The inscription on Moses' ring is a verse derived from the Bible: *Iṣbir tu'jar uṣduq tanjū* ('Be patient and you shall be rewarded, say the truth and you shall be saved'). Solomon's inscription read: *Subḥāna man aljama al-jinna bi-kalimātihi* ('Praised be he who curbed the demons with his words'). Christ had the following inscription on his ring, derived from the Gospels: *Ṭūbā li-ʿabdin dhukira Allāh min ajlihi wa-waylun li-ʿabdin nusiya Allāh min ajlihi* ('Blessed is the servant on whose account God was remembered, and woe to the servant on whose account God was forgotten'), while the Prophet Muḥammad's inscription read *Lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*.

Engravings on the Imams' Rings

The imams are reported to have had a great variety of different inscriptions on their rings. Below is listed the various inscriptions each imam is said to have used.

The inscriptions on the ring of the imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) are reported to have been: 'Dominion is Gods', 'God is the dominion', 'God is the dominion and the truth', 'There is no God but Allāh, the dominion, the evident truth', 'God is the dominion and 'Alī is His servant', 'Glory be to God from all', 'Dominion is God's', 'Dominion is to God, the one the victorious', 'Muḥammad is the messenger of God', ''Alī believes in God', 'Truly God is the powerful one', 'God is sufficient for me', 'I leaned my back on God', 'Whatever God wills', 'There is no strength except in God', 'I ask God for forgiveness', 'For every terror I have prepared a "There is no god but Allāh"', 'For every woe "There is no god but Allāh"', 'For every catastrophe that comes down "God is sufficient for me"', 'I ask Allāh for forgiveness for every sin', 'For every oppressive worry and woe "Whatever God wishes"', 'For every renewed delight "praise be to God", 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib has no delight that is not from God'.

The inscriptions attributed to the second imam al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī (d. 49/669): 'Glory to God', 'God is sufficient for me', 'There is no god but Allāh, the dominion and the evident truth', 'Glory only to God', 'Praise be to God', 'God is great and on Him I rely'. There is a tradition which relates that al-Ḥasan saw Jesus in a dream and asked him what he had inscribed on his ring, and Jesus told him. From this we see the Shīʿite belief that saintly people may have the solution to their problem presented by a prophet in a dream.[91]

[91] For more information on the way dreams are said to solve problems for the dreamer, see, for example, Ignaz Goldziher, 'The Appearance of the Prophet in

The third imam al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (d. 61/680) is reported to have had the following inscriptions engraved on his ring: 'God is all-powerful', '"There is no god but Allāh" prepares one to meet God', 'God is sufficient for me', 'Mention of God the almighty', 'Praise be to God', 'Every appointed time has its book'.

The inscriptions on the ring of the fourth imam, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, known as Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, al-Sajjād and also al-Bakkā' (d. 94/713) were as follows. One was like his father's, 'God is all-powerful', and also '"There is no god but Allāh" prepares one to meet God', 'May the killer of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī be disgraced and wretched',[92] 'Glory to God', 'My success is only through God', 'Praise to God the exalted the most powerful', and 'I learned and will do'.

The inscriptions on the ring of the fifth imam Muḥammad b. 'Alī, known as al-Bāqir, were: 'God is all-powerful', '"There is no god but Allāh" prepares one to meet God', 'Glory to God', 'Lord do not cast me down alone', 'I think good of God, the trusted Prophet and his gracious plenipotentiary, and of al-Ḥusayn and al-Ḥasan', 'Glory to God from all', and 'Power to God from all'.

The inscriptions said to have been on the ring of the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq are 'Allāh is the creator of all things', '"There is no god but Allāh" prepares one to meet God', 'Whatever God wishes, there is no strength except in God, I ask God for forgiveness', 'Lord pave the way for me, you are my trust, protect me from the evil of your creatures', and 'God is my benefactor and my protection from His creatures'.[93]

The inscriptions engraved on the rings of the seventh imam Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, known as al-Kāẓim are 'Dominion is God's', 'God the dominion', 'Dominion is God's alone', and 'God is sufficient for me'. His ring was decorated with a rose and a crescent on the outer part.[94]

The eighth imam 'Alī al-Riḍā had the same inscription as his father,[95] 'God is sufficient for me'. According to another tradition the inscription read 'Whatever God wishes, there is no strength except in God'.[96]

Dreams', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1912), 503–6; Leah Kinberg, *Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, Morality in the Guise of Dreams, A Critical Edition of Kitab al-Manam* (Leiden 1994), 64–5.

[92] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il*, 5:101 no. 6038.

[93] Ibid., 5:100 no. 6036

[94] Ibid., 5:100 no. 6034.

[95] Ibid., 5:102.

[96] Ibid., 5:100 no. 6036.

The ninth imam Muḥammad al-Jawād (d. 220/835) had the inscription 'None is as potent as God'. The tenth imam 'Alī al-Hādī (d. 254/868) had 'God is my Lord and my protection from His creatures' and 'Keeping covenants is a characteristic of the Worshipped One' engraved on his ring. The eleventh imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 260/874) had the following inscriptions: 'I am a martyr for God' and 'Blessed is the possessor of the keys to the heavens and the earth'.

I was unable to find any sources which provide information on the inscription engraved on the ring of the twelfth imam Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-'Askarī (disappeared in 260/874). Perhaps this is due to the fact that he was quite young when he disappeared, and had hidden in the cellar of his home in Samarra, so no one would have seen his ring, if he indeed had one. It is likely that if he did, the inscription on it would have been of the same general nature as that of the other imams.

The numerous different traditions which report the inscriptions on the rings of each of the imams make it likely that there is some truth in them. An analysis of the various inscriptions shows that in a number of cases the imams adopted the same inscription as their father; this is the case with the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth imams.

Interestingly enough, all the inscriptions consist of sentences or phrases with none of just a single word. Most contain the word Allāh or one of its synonyms. Some of them contain one or both of the *shahāda*s (Muslim credo) and a call to recognize God's oneness.

As for the inscriptions on the prophets' rings, some of these allude to a story or an event connected with that prophet, for example Noah, whom God saved from drowning, Solomon who tamed the demons, and Abraham whom God saved from the fire.

We should note that while some inscriptions are quite clear, others are opaque, perhaps due to the troubled and dangerous times in which the imams lived, so that they found this way to express their concerns. For example, numerous inscriptions are associated with 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, although before his appointment as caliph he had only one, 'Dominion is God's', while after his appointment this changed to 'Dominion is God's, the one the victorious'.[97] Indeed, we find that 'Alī changed the inscriptions a number of times during his caliphate. For example, after he made peace with the people of Damascus his inscription read 'Muḥammad the messenger of God'.[98] Each inscription was thus made to fit the circumstances of the moment; if he faced

[97] Ibid., 11:428–9 no. 15175; al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir*, 1:100.
[98] Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut 1985), 3:30.

enemies and demanded his rights he wore a ring inscribed with 'Dominion is God's', 'God the king the truth', or 'There is no god except Allāh the king the evident truth'.[99] In this way 'Alī tells his enemies that their achievements were obtained through falsification and that what they did was against God's will. When he was pursued by his enemies his ring was engraved with 'I lean my back on God',[100] when he was beset with troubles and difficulties he had 'God is sufficient for me' engraved on his ring,[101] and when his enemies prided themselves on their strength his inscription read 'Glory is to God from all'.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of this is the difference between the inscription engraved on the imam al-Ḥusayn's ring, 'God is all-powerful' and that on the ring of the imam 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, 'May the killer of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī be disgraced and wretched'.

We can see that the inscriptions' correspond with the varying circumstances of the imams' lives. The different formulations of the inscriptions belonging to each of the imams may be explained by the effects of time and the errors which have crept in during the process of copying and recopying the texts over the years. On the other hand, the sheer number of traditions on the inscriptions engraved on the imams' rings and their detailed nature indicate the importance which their authors ascribed to recording and reporting them for posterity.

The Most Meritorious Inscription

As we have seen, the rings of the prophets and imams contained inscriptions of many kinds. However, the imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq instructed the Shīʿites to engrave on their rings the inscription 'Whatever God wishes, there is no strength except in God, I ask God for forgiveness' and assured them that this would protect them from abject poverty.[102]

When should the Inscription be Engraved?

The special dates which Shīʿite tradition defines as auspicious for engraving the ring are a further demonstration of the importance attached to this act. Thus, Shīʿite religious scholars recommend that the inscription be engraved on the first Friday of the month of

[99] 'Alī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Fuṣūl al-muhimma fī maʿrifat aḥwāl al-aʾimma* (Beirut 1988), 124.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:103 no. 6042.

Ramaḍān,[103] perhaps because Friday is the most auspicious day of the week[104] and Ramaḍān is the most auspicious of months.[105]

Elsewhere, in a tradition concerning the twelfth imam, two times are specified as auspicious for engraving the ring: sunrise, and the first Thursday in the month of Rajab, the latter being the most appropriate since on that day men are protected from the evil descending from the heavens and rising from the earth.[106]

What should not be Engraved on the Ring

According to Shīʿite sources the Prophet forbade the engraving of the images of living creatures, animals or birds, on the ring,[107] apparently due to the general prohibition on graven images in Islam.

Wearing Multiple Rings

Following the custom of their imams Shīʿite legal experts permit the wearing of one or more rings on the little and ring fingers.[108] How-

[103] Al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim*, 1991, 93.

[104] Friday is considered the 'lord of days' in the eyes of God, and more important than the day ending the fast of Ramaḍān and the Day of Sacrifice. It has special merits: it is the day on which Adam was created and brought to earth; and God took him on that day; there is one hour on that day in which whatever a man asks of God, as long as it is not something forbidden, God will give it; the Day of Resurrection, which nothing and no one can escape, will be on a Friday. For more details see al-Kafʿamī, *Miṣbāḥ*, 419ff.; al-Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāḥ*, 284ff.

[105] Among the merits of this month are that it contains the fast days; the Qur'ān was revealed in it; fates are decided and sins forgiven in this month; in it God frees whom He wants from the fires of hell; and the demons are fettered. For more information, see al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb*, 64–72.

[106] ʿAqīl, *Mawsūʿa*, 26.

[107] Al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍiruhu al-faqīh*, 4:10.

[108] Sunnī legists are not agreed on the number of rings one should wear. The Mālikī school, for instance, forbids multiple rings, even if their total weight is no more than two dirhams (see al-Nafrāwī, *al-Fawākih al-dawānī* [Beirut n.d.], 2:404). Within the Shāfiʿī school there are three different opinions: according to one it is strictly forbidden to wear more than one ring (see Zayn al-Dīn al-Malībārī, *Fatḥ al-maʿīn* [Beirut 1995], 2:161), another frowns on multiple rings and permits this only if it is the usual habit of people of the same class as the wearer (Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī, *Nihāyat al-muḥtāj* [no place n.d.] 3:92), and a third permits it outright if it is the usual habit of people of the same class as the wearer and forbids it otherwise (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Sharbīnī, *Mughnī al-muḥtāj* [no place 1991], 2:97–8). The Ḥanbalī school permits the wearing of two or more rings if such is the custom (Manṣūr b. Yūnus al-Bahūtī, *Kashshāf al-qināʿ* [Beirut 1997], 2:66). I have found no discussion of this issue in the writings of the Ḥanafī school.

ever, it is considered reprehensible to wear an even number of rings; therefore, Shīʿites wear one, three or five rings.[109] This does not mean that one wears all of one's rings at one-and-the-same time; the number of rings can depend on the circumstances or the occasion. A tradition related by al-Faḍl b. ʿImrān[110] about Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq quotes the latter as saying 'Every believer should wear five rings'.[111] According to another tradition "Alī possessed four rings which he wore: a sapphire because he was noble, a turquoise because he was helpful, Chinese iron because he was strong, and carnelian because he protected'.[112]

Summary and Conclusions

The custom of wearing a ring is the subject of a number of works produced in the classical period not all of which have survived. The extant compositions contain discussions on the rules of wearing rings in Islam and the Prophet's customs in this regard. The modern works on wearing rings are of a Shīʿite orientation and focus on wearing the ring on the right hand and on the merits and attributes of the various types of ring stones.

According to Shīʿite belief the rules for wearing the ring are of divine origin; it was the angel Gabriel who told the Prophet to wear the ring on his little and/or ring finger. Wearing the ring on the left hand is considered reprehensible, since it was the custom of Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads.

The custom of wearing a ring is of such importance among Shīʿites that it has entered Quranic exegesis. Shīʿite commentaries state that God told Abraham that the Shīʿites can be recognized through the five marks of their faith, one of which is that they wear a ring on their right hand. The theme of wearing the ring on the right hand is also present in Shīʿite poetry. In light of the importance which the Shīʿite doctrine attaches to wearing the ring on the right hand, it is not surprising that this subject is mentioned in so many traditions and that books on ritual law go into such great detail concerning the rules and merits of wearing the ring.

As we have seen, the Shīʿites prefer rings made of silver, but also wear copper and iron rings, in accordance with the custom of their imams. Five different types of stone are considered fit to be set into

[109] ʿAqīl, *Mawsūʿa*, 79.
[110] I did not find a biography of this person in Shīʿite biographical collections.
[111] Al-Shaʿīrī, *Jāmiʿ al-akhbār*, 135.
[112] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil*, 5:98 no. 6031.

the rings. The stone with the greatest benefit is red, yellow or white carnelian, followed by turquoise, emerald and crystal. Each stone has a number of merits ascribed to it the purpose being to encourage Shīʿites to use them and so maintain the imams' customs and preserve the external appearance of the Shīʿite individual.

As regards the various inscriptions on the rings and the most auspicious times for engraving, the Shīʿites follow the example of the prophets and their imams. The imams used different inscriptions depending on the circumstances.

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The Ḥusaynī Sermon (*al-khuṭba al-ḥusayniyya*) in Shīʿīte literature: Development, structure, venue, preachers' titles

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Introduction

The death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī,[1] his family and supporters in the battle of Karbalāʾ[2] (680 CE) on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ,[3] has had a tremendous effect on Shīʿites[4] and is reflected in rites of mourning that have been performed from the time of the event itself down to our day and age.[5]

The rites themselves, whose performance has always been encouraged by Shīʿite imams, take the form of mass gatherings in which the participants mourn Ḥusayn and cry over his fate, listen to elegies and recount the tragic events of his death. With time the ceremony developed into a social and religious custom that has become an annual tradition.

One of the most important elements of the ceremony is the Ḥusaynī Sermon (*al-khuṭba al-ḥusayniyya*), which is devoted to the events surrounding Ḥusayn's martyrdom.

In this paper we shall describe in some detail the way the sermon is reflected in contemporary Shīʿite literature.*

The current state of research

To our knowledge very few studies have directly addressed Ḥusaynī Sermons as they are performed today in Arabic among Twelver Shīʿites, in the way that the present paper does. However, numerous scholars in both the Orient and Occident have done research on various aspects related to the Ḥusaynī Sermon; scholarly interest has focused in particular on the following issues:

* I am indebted to Prof. George Kanazi for his helpful comments on this article, I am also grateful to Dr. Muhammad Sadiq Al-Kirbassi for his comments on a previous draft of this article.

[1] For details see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Ḥusayn b. Abī Ṭālib", *EI*² (1986), Vol. 3, pp. 240–243.

[2] For details see E. Honigman, "Karbalāʾ", *EI*² (1997), Vol. 4, pp. 637–639.

[3] For details see Ph. Marcais, "ʿĀshūrāʾ", *EI*² (1986), Vol. 1, p. 705.

[4] Shīʿa and Shīʿite refer throughout this article to Imamī (Twelver) Shīʿism

[5] The fact that Shīʿite writers compose works on this subject to this very day, more than 1,300 years after the event, constitutes a unique phenomenon in Arab literature. Shīʿite imams encourage such writing and promise great spiritual rewards to those who engage in it. For more details see Khalid Sindawi, *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2000), pp. 35–36 [in Hebrew].

1. Annual *condolence ceremonies* held on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ throughout the Shīʿite world.

This issue is dealt with, for example, in Mahmud Ayoub's comprehensive study *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (Mouton, 1978); articles by various authors collected in *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (edited by Peter Chelkowski) also deal with condolence ceremonies in various Shīʿite communities.

Another notable study is Ibrahim al-Ḥaydarī's comprehensive *The Tragedy of Karbalā'*; al-Ḥaydarī discusses the ceremonies performed on ʿĀshūrāʾ and their implications for Shīʿite social and political life. He argues that these ceremonies have become ways of expressing dissent and opposition to established authority.

2. *Biographies of Ḥusaynī preachers*. One noteworthy example of a work devoted to this topic is Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kirbāssī's *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-ḥusaynī* ("Dictionary of Ḥusaynī Preachers"), which forms part of a series entitled Al-Mawsūʿa al-Ḥusayniyya ("The Ḥusaynī Encyclopedia").

3. *The Friday noon sermon in Iran* and its political significance for the Islamic revolution in that country. One work in which this subject is dealt with in considerable depth is Haggay Ram, *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran: the Use of the Friday Congregational Sermon*, Washington: The American University Press, 1994.

4. *The Merits of Āshūrāʾ Day* and its connections to the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This aspect has attracted growing scholarly attention in recent years. Here we shall mention two studies of this kind: Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh, *Ṣiyām yawm ʿāshūrāʾ* ("The Fast of ʿĀshūrāʾ Day") (Beirut, 1998); Hawting, "The Tawwæbûn Atonement and Ashura", *JSAI* (17) 1994, pp. 166–181.

5. *The status of Karbalāʾ as a holy site*. Among studies addressing this topic we may mention George Kanazi's *Karbalāʾ fī al-adab al-shīʿī* ("Karbalāʾ in Shīʿite Literature"). Another work is Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-Ghaṭāʾ, *'Al-Arḍ' wal-turāb al-ḥusaynī* ("The Earth and Ḥusaynī Soil") (Qumm, 1995).

6. *Modern-day "maqātil" (stories about Ḥusayn's murder)*. The writers of these stories emphasize Ḥusayn's sublime revolutionary principles, which may be implemented anywhere and at any time. Examples of such writings are the following: Madī Shams al-Dīn, *Thawrat al-Ḥusayn, ẓurūfuhā al-ijtimāʿiyya wa-āthāruhā al-insāniyya* ("Ḥusayn's Revolution: Its Social Context and Its Human Consequences"); al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, *Aḍwāʾ ʿalā thawrat al-Ḥusayn* ("Shedding Light on Ḥusayn's Revolution") (Beirut, 1996).

7. *Elegies for Ḥusayn*, such as Lynda Clarke, "Some Examples of Elegy on the Imam Husayn", *Al-Serat* (XII) 1986.

A number of studies have dealt the issue of the killing of Ḥusayn from a historical perspective. One of these is H. Jafri's *The Origins and Early Development of Shīʿa Islam* (London,1979) In Chapter Seven of his book Jafri discusses the events leading up to Ḥusayn's death. The author argues that Ḥusayn had decided before the battle that he would sacrifice himself in order to arouse anti-Umayyad sentiments

among Muslims after his death, *contra* western scholarship which refused to perceive Ḥusayn's internal conflict on the eve of his demise. Jafri notes at the end of the chapter that one of his main sources of information on "the tragedy of Ḥusayn" was Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*.

On the occasion of the 1400th anniversary of Ḥusayn's birth in 1984 an international conference was held in London, where scholars were invited to speak on the subject of *maqtal al-Ḥusayn*. The texts of the fifteen lectures delivered at the conference, dealing with various aspects of Ḥusayn's death, were later published in a special issue of the journal *Al-Ṣirāṭ* and in a book entitled *Al-Imām al-Ḥusayn* (London, 1986).

All of the above leads to the conclusion that although numerous studies exist which touch on many aspects of the Ḥusaynī Sermon in modern times, none has so far appeared which takes it as its main theme, to be investigated in depth, as the present paper does.

The specific issues we shall address in our study are the following:

1. Unique features of modern-day Ḥusaynī Sermons.
2. The stages of development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon and the changes it has undergone.
3. The structure of the Ḥusaynī Sermon.
4. The topics discussed in a modern Ḥusaynī Sermon.
5. The occasions on which, and the places where, Ḥusaynī Sermons are held.

The sources used for the present study

Our research was based on an investigation of 161 Ḥusaynī Sermons delivered by modern Shīʿite Ḥusaynī preachers. Most of these sermons were disseminated via the internet and/or on the Al-Manār television network on various dates, as follows:

– Nine sermons by the preacher ʿAlī al-Mīlānī at www.aqaed.com/alnadwat/index.html

– Two sermons by ʿAbd al-Zahrāʾ al-Kaʿbī, five sermons by ʿAbd al-Riḍā Maʿāsh, twelve sermons by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Muhājir, five sermons by Ḍiyāʾ al-Zubaydī, and ten sermons by Nāṣir al-Ḥāʾirī, all at www.angelfire.com/ns/alwilaya/

– One hundred sermons by Aḥmad al-Wāʾilī and ten sermons by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Fālī at www.wadyalgary.com/mejales-waeli.htm

– Eight sermons delivered by Ḥasan Naṣrallāh via the Al-Manār television network during the first ten days of the month of *muḥarram*, the month in which Ḥusayn was killed.

What is the Ḥusaynī Sermon?

The Ḥusaynī Sermon is, first of all, a sermon, a talk on a religious topic by a Shīʿite preacher, at the end of which some mention is made of the death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī,

members of his family and his followers on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ and/or the fate of his family and descendants after that day. The commemoration of these events is accompanied by the reading of a selection of elegiac verse, whether in classical or colloquial Arabic. The sermon opens with an introduction read in a distinct way, or with a poem, which then leads to a description of one or another of the calamities that befell Ḥusayn or one of the people who was with him. The sermon thus begins and ends on this emotional note, between which the preacher interposes the sermon's main topic. The name Ḥusaynī Sermon thus derives from the fact that in every such sermon mention is made of the fate of the unfortunate Ḥusayn.

But Ḥusayn is not always the only figure of the times mentioned in the sermon, which may also bring up incidents in the lives of the Prophet Muḥammad[6] (d. 632 CE), of Ḥusayn's father ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib[7] (d. 661 CE) or of another Shīʿite imām. However, whatever other topics are dealt with during the sermon, toward the end it will always be connected with the tragedy at Karbalāʾ. More details will be presented below, in the section on the structure of the sermon.

Stages in the development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon

The following views exist on the sermon's stages of development.

A. *Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn*[8]

According to Shams al-Dīn the first and primary source for the Ḥusayn Sermon is a group of writings of the type known as "books of the fatal battle" (*kutub al-maqtal*),[9] with elegiac poetry as a second source. He distinguished three stages in the development of the sermon: *The first stage* began with the death of Ḥusayn in 680 and ended with the fall of Baghdad in 1258 CE at the hands of Hulago,[10] or perhaps somewhat earlier. *The second stage* lasted from the fall of Baghdad through

[6] For details see T. Ehlert, "Muḥammad", *EI*² (1993), Vol. 7, pp. 360–387.

[7] For details see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib", *EI*² (1986), Vol. 1, pp. 381–386.

[8] Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ḥārithī al-Hamdhānī al-ʿĀmilī was a prominent Shīʿite jurist and writer. Born in Najaf in 1931, he emigrated to Lebanon in 1969 and there was appointed to the post of Deputy Chairman of the Shīʿite Supreme Islamic Council. Later, in 1993, he became Chairman of the Council. He died in 2001.

For more details on him see Fayṣal Khālid al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī* (Beirut: Dār wa-maktabat al-hilāl, 1st printing, 2004), p. 148, fn. 1; www.14masom.com/aalem-balad/10/10/htm.

[9] Among Shīʿites such compositions, describing the circumstances of Ḥusayn's death in the battle of Karbalāʾ, are considered a genre of their own. The first such "books of the fatal battle" were composed already in the first century AH. The earliest known book entitled *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* is ascribed to Iṣbaʿ b. Nubāta, who died in the year 719 CE; this was followed by another, of the same title, written by Jābir b. Yazīd al-Jaʿfī (d. 745 CE). Unfortunately both these books are lost. The first of the long series of compositions in this genre to have reached us is *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* ascribed to Abū Mikhnaf (d. 773 CE), who was followed by many other writers over the centuries. All the early compositions were entitled *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, but with time other titles began to be used, among them: *Madʾan al-bukāʾ*, *Nafas al-mahmūm*, *Muthīr al-aḥzān*, *Al-Mufīd fī dhikrā al-sibṭ al-shahīd*, and more. For more details on this genre see Sindawi, *The Maqātil*, pp. 33–57; S. Günther, "Maqātil Literature in Medieval Islam", *JAL* 25 (1994), pp. 166–181.

[10] For details see J. Burton-Page, "Hūlāgū", *EI*² (1990), Vol. 3, pp. 569–570.

the "period of decline" (*ʿuṣūr al-inḥiṭāṭ*) until the beginning of the "period of revival" (*ʿaṣr al-nahḍa*).[11] *The third stage* began with the "period of revival" and has lasted down to our day.

B. *Dākhil al-Sayyid al-Khuḍarī*[12]

Al-Khuḍarī, too, speaks of three stages in the development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon. The first stage consists of the sermons given by Ḥusayn's captured wives, sisters and aunts when they were led as prisoners to Damascus. In the second stage elegiac poems were composed and read in the presence of the imāms of the Shīʿite faithful. Finally, the third stage is that of the full-fledged, contemporary Ḥusaynī Sermon.[13]

However, Fayṣal al-Kāẓimī argues against Al-Khuḍarī's division. He dismisses the latter's first stage, since whatever sermons may have been produced then were spontaneous, and still under the direct influence of the tragic events at Karbalāʾ.[14]

Al-Kāẓimī's objection seems to be valid, since an examination of Ḥusaynī Sermons, past and present, shows that far from being improvised, they show all the signs of careful preparation and planning. Al-Khuḍarī's classification suffers from two further drawbacks as well. It is superficial, ignoring, for example, periods of stagnation in Shīʿite literature, and none of the periods are given any chronological boundaries.

C. *Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kirbāssī*[15]

Al-Kirbāssī perceives seven stages in the development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon, as follows:[16]

[11] There is considerable disagreement among scholars as to precisely when the "period of revival" began. N. Tomiche, for example, in her commendable entry "Nahḍa" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, takes the end of the "revival" to be the immediate aftermath of WWI, when the West succeeded in getting control of most of the Arab world, for which see N. Tomiche, "Nahḍa", *EI*² (1993), Vol. 7, pp. 900–903. However, Salāma Mūsā in his book *Mā hiya al-nahḍa*, published in 1934, claims that we are still "living to a large extent in the Middle Ages even today, for religious doctrine is allowed to influence science, and the old controls the new". For more detail see Salāma Mūsā, *Mā hiya al-nahḍa* (Beirut: Maktabat al-maʿārif, 1962), p.114.

[12] Born in the city of Al-Khaḍr (Southern Iraq) in 1952, he moved to Al-Najaf in 1967 in order to pursue his religious studies. Today he is one of the best known preachers of the Ḥusaynī Sermon. He has also written a number of books. For more details see Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī* (London: Hussaini Centre for Research, 1999), p. 184.

[13] For more details on his views see Dākhil Sayyid Ḥasan, *Muʿjam al-khuṭabāʾ* (Beirut: Al-Muʾassasa al-ʿālamiyya lil-thaqāfa wal-iʿlām, 1991), Vol. 7, pp. 41–46.

[14] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 157.

[15] Muḥammad Ṣādiq b. Muḥammad al-Kirbāssī was born in Karbalāʾ in 1947 and studied at the local university. He was politically and socially very active, and a prolific writer. Eventually he left for Iran, later moving to Beirut, and finally in 1986 to London, where he still lives. He is the author of fifty-seven works on Islamic jurisprudence and other aspects of Arab culture, the best-known being the encyclopedia *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-Ḥusayniyya*, a work consisting of over five-hundred volumes. For more details on the author see issue 11–12 (1999) of the journal *Al-Murshid* (published in Damascus), pp. 127–133. For further details on his encyclopedia see Kh. Sindawi, "Al-Mawsūʿa al-Ḥusayniyya", *Al-Risāla* 11–12 (2002–2003), pp. 225–245; ʿAlāʾ al-Zaydī, *Maʿālim dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-Ḥusayniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-mujtabā, 1st printing, 2000).

[16] For details on the stages see Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 37ff.

The first stage: From the death of Ḥusayn in 680 CE to the end of the 12th imām's[17] "minor occultation"[18] between 874 and 941 CE.

The second stage: from 940 CE until the beginning of the thirteenth century CE. This was a time when Shīʿite dynasties ruled various parts of the Muslim world: the Buwayhids[19] (933–1066) in Baghdad; the Ḥamdānids[20] (905–1004) in Aleppo and the Fāṭimids[21] (969–1171) in Cairo.

The third stage: from the beginning of the thirteenth until the end of the fifteenth century. During this period the Shīʿite states were no more, and the Ḥusaynī Sermon disappeared in a number of regions, and in others its occurrence became severely limited.

The fourth stage: this stage lasted from the beginning, or shortly before the beginning, of the sixteenth century, until sometime in the nineteenth century. During this stage Shīʿite preachers wrote books of Ḥusaynī Sermons which were read from the pulpits.[22] As a result elements of religious exhortation and instruction came to predominate.

The fifth stage: from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. During this stage a number of extremely gifted preachers appeared, who were able to prevent the decline of the sermon in the face of the increasing influence of the modern media.

The sixth stage: the second half of the twentieth century. During this stage Western colonialist rule over Muslim lands waned and ended, and the Muslim world faced new challenges, which in turn affected the style and content of Ḥusaynī Sermons.

The seventh stage: the stage of the future development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon.

The problem with Al-Kirbāssī's division is that on the one hand he proposes a relatively large number of stages without, however, providing sufficient evidence for their need and, on the other, his first stage conflates the initial, spontaneous sermons with later, more carefully constructed versions. To his credit, he was the first to have taken into consideration the influence which the Shīʿite states of the Middle Ages had on the development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon.

A comparison of the three views outlined above reveals that all agree with respect to two developmental stages: the first, from immediately after the battle of Karbalāʾ until the end of the line of twelve imāms, all of whom encouraged the celebration of ʿĀshūrāʾ and the preaching of sermons in commemoration of Ḥusayn and his tragic

[17] For details on the 18th imam see J.G.J. Ter Haar, "Muḥammad al-Ḳāʾim", *EI²* (1993), Vol. 7, p. 443; A. Abdulaziz and A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp. 39–77.

[18] For details on the minor occultation see D.B. Macdonald – [M.G.S. Hodgson], "Ghayba", ", *EI²* (1991), Vol.2, p. 1026.

[19] For details see C. Lollin Davies, "Buwayhids or Būyids", ", *EI²* (19863), Vol. 1, pp. 1350–7.

[20] For details see M. Canard, "Ḥamdānids", ", *EI²* (1971), Vol. 3, pp. 126–131.

[21] For details see M. Canard, "Fāṭimids", ", *EI²* (1985), Vol. 3, pp. 850–862.

[22] For detail on the pulpits see G.S.P. Frenville, "Minbar", *EI²*, Vol. 7, (1993), pp. 78–80.

death; and the most recent (Shams al-Din's and Al-Khuḍarī's third stage and Al-Kirbāssī's sixth), from the beginning of the modern period until today.

In contradistinction to the views reviewed above, our own research has led us to the conclusion that the development of the Ḥusaynī Sermon over the centuries is best described as having gone through four stages, as follows:

The first stage

This stage begins just after the battle of Karbalā' (680 CE) and ends at approximately 940 CE, with the establishment of the Shī'ite states, in particular that of the Buwayhids in Baghdad. During this stage the Shī'ite imāms worked to establish the Ḥusaynī Sermon as a permanent feature of Shī'ite worship, as part of the organized observance of mourning ceremonies for Ḥusayn. The imāms encouraged the attendance at these ceremonies, in which the faithful cried over Ḥusayn's fate and heard elegiac poems,[23] in addition to the sermon itself, and pronounced them to be pious deeds. As a result Ḥusayn's tomb in Karbalā' developed into a significant site of pilgrimage, in which the Ḥusaynī Sermon played an important role.

One of the most favorable periods for the Ḥusaynī Sermon at this stage was during the imamate of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq[24] (d. 765). This was the time when the Umayyad[25] dynasty fell and was replaced by the Abbasids.[26] It proved to be an opportune moment in history, in which the Ḥusaynī Sermon flourished, as shown by the great number of traditions in which Ja'far al-Ṣādiq urges Shī'ites to visit Ḥusayn's shrine and perform the Ḥusaynī Sermon.

A second period of flowering during this same stage occurred in the days of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq's grandson 'Alī al-Riḍā[27] (d. 818). The Ḥusaynī Sermon received an invigorating boost when the latter became crown prince of the Abbasid caliph Al-Ma'mūn[28] (813–833) and gave many Shī'ite preachers and poets an opportunity to declaim in his presence.

[23] Shī'ite poets have been writing elegies over the death of Ḥusayn from the time of his death down to our own day and age. The number of extant elegies is huge. Many of these poems have been published in collections such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭurayḥī's *Al-Muntakhab fī jam' al-marāthī wal-khuṭab* and Muḥsin al-Amīn al-'Āmilī's *Al-Durr al-naḍīd fī marāthī al-sabṭ al-shahīd*. The latter contains over six thousand lines of poetry. In fact, some poets have written entire collections devoted to mourning Ḥusayn, and others simply did not write any other kind of poetry. For example, the eighteenth century poet al-Balādī wrote a thousand-line elegy for Ḥusayn. Such poems usually possess the following pattern: at first the poet describes his own sadness and tears over Ḥusayn's death; this is followed by a description of the events at Karbalā', and an enumeration of Ḥusayn's virtues and exploits as well as his blood-ties to the Prophet; the poem ends with a description of his untimely and unjust death when in a state of thirst, and an assurance that he will be able to quench his thirst in Paradise.

A good source for such elegies is Jawād Shubbar's *Adab al-ṭaff aw shu'arā' al-Ḥusayn min al-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī Ḥattā al-qarn al-rābi' 'ashar* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-a'lamī, 1st printing, 1969). For further information see L. Clark, "Elegy (Marthiya) on Husayn: Arabic and Persian", *Al-Serat* 7 (1986), pp. 13–18; G.W. Leither, "The Elegy of Hassan and Hussain", *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 2nd (1981), pp. 206–208; MuḤammad Kāmil Sulaymān, *Al-Ïdiyūlūjiā al-shī'iyya fī rithā' al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-lubnānī, 1st printing, 1981).

[24] For details see M.G.S. Hodgson, "Dja'far al-Ṣādiq", *EI²* (1965), Vol. 2, pp. 374–375.

[25] For details see G. Nonneman, "Umayyads", *EI²* (2000), Vol. 10, pp. 840–854.

[26] For details see B. Lewis, "'Abbāsids", *EI²* (1960), Vol. 1, pp. 15–23.

[27] For details see B. Lewis, "'Alī al-Riḍa", *EI²* (1960), Vol. 1, pp. 399–400.

[28] For details see M. Rekaya, "Al-Ma'mūn b. Hārūn Al-Rashīd", *EI²* (1991), Vol. 4, pp. 331–339.

It was during the first part of this stage that the term *munshid*[29] (literally: reciter) was first used in connection with the Ḥusaynī Sermon. The first person who received this epithet was probably Abū ʿUmāra al-Munshid (d. in the second century AH). A number of prominent poets fulfilled the function of *murshid*, but were not given the epithet, among them Abū Hārūn al-Makfūf[30] (d. 765) and Jaʿfar b. ʿAffān al-Ṭāʾī[31] (d. 767).

Furthermore, in a tradition about the imām Al-Ṣādiq it is related that the imām inquired of a man from Kūfa about what he had heard concerning the situation at Ḥusayn's shrine. The man said to him: "I was told that in the middle of the month of Shaʿbān people come [to the shrine] from Kūfa and from elsewhere. The women bewail, readers read, storytellers tell the story, mourners mourn, and reciters utter elegies".[32] From this tradition we learn that at the shrine there were storytellers who told the pilgrims the story of what had happened to Ḥusayn.

According to Shams al-Dīn this tradition reflects the latest formal development in the performance of the Ḥusaynī Sermon, since it testifies to the existence at the shrine of both men and women who relate Ḥusayn's story as well as others who specialized in the recital of elegies in his memory.[33]

The most difficult times during this stage occurred in the imamate of ʿAlī al-Hādī[34] (d. 868), for the ruling caliph, Al-Mutawakkil[35] (847–861) pursued a policy of harsh violence against both the shrine and Shīʿites in general.

The fortunes of the Ḥusaynī Sermon thus waxed and waned in accordance with the political vicissitudes of the times. All Shīʿite imāms did their best to promote and spread the use of the sermon, but its fortunes clearly depended on external political circumstances.

[29] Born in Al-Madīna, he was an eminent personality of the second century AH who wrote a well-known elegy on Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī. For more details on him see Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 318.

[30] His official name was Mūsā b. ʿUmayr al-Kūfī, a companion of the imams Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732) and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. He is reported to have recited the elegies of the poet Al-Sayyid Al-Ḥimyarī (d. between 789 and 795) in the presence of the imām Al-Ṣādiq. For more details on him see Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-ḥusaynī*, p. 42; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī* (Teheran: Muʾassasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1st printing, 1994), p. 150 no. 1670–4; Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Teheran: Teheran University Press, 1963), pp. 14, 44; Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī Ibn Dāwud, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Teheran: Teheran University Press, 1963), pp. 551, 570 no. 34; Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, edited and annotated by Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1929), p. 222 no. 398; Al-Ḥasan Ibn Yūsuf b. ʿAlī b. al-Muṭṭahar, known as Al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī* (Qumm: Dār al-dhakhāʾir, 1990), p. 267 no. 13).

[31] A prominent Shīʿite poet (d. c. 150/767), known for his compositions on members of the Prophet's family. For more details see Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-ḥusaynī*, p. 42; Al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, p. 289 no. 508; Al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī*, p. 32 no. 8; Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-rijāl*, p. 87 no. 310.

[32] Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* (Al-Najaf: Dār al-murtaḍawiyya lil-nashr, 1977), pp. 325–326 no. 1.

[33] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-ḥusaynī*, pp. 166–167; Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Wāqiʿat Karbalāʾ fī al-wujdān al-shaʿbī* (Beirut: Al-Muʾassasa al-dawliyya lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 3rd printing, 2000), p. 258.

[34] For details see D.M. Donaldson, *The Shīʿite Religion* (London: Luzac, 1933), pp. 209–216.

[35] For details see J.R. Blackburn, "Al-Mutawakkil ʿalā ʾllāḥ", *EI*^{2} (1993), Vol. 7, pp. 777–778.

The second stage

This stage begins with the "minor occultation" of the twelfth imām Muḥammad al-Mahdī in the city of Sāmarrā'[36] in 874 CE. A number of significant events contributed to the considerable evolution of the Ḥusaynī Sermon during this stage. Three Shī'ite states emerged in the Muslim world, including that of the Būwayhids in Baghdad (from 945 CE) and the Fāṭimids in Cairo (from 972 CE). The rulers of these states naturally lended their support to the performance of the sermon, in stark contrast to the preceding period, when both Umayyad and Abbasid rulers did their best to suppress Shī'ite rites in general. Shī'ites thus viewed the new circumstances as the fulfillment of hopes which they had entertained for a long time, but until now in vain.

Just as the emergence of the Shī'ite states brought about a flourishing of the Ḥusaynī Sermon, so did the disappearance of these states bring about a reversal in its fortunes. While the preachers of Baghdad continue preaching the Ḥusaynī Sermon even after Būwayhid rule came to an end in the year 447 AH, it would appear that such was not the case in Cairo after the Fāṭimid dynasty in Egypt came to an end in 1171 CE. Rather, its quick disappearance from the historical record indicates that the new Ayyūbid[37] rulers of the land apparently suppressed the sermon harshly.

As for the Ḥamdānids, their rule in Aleppo did not last very long (944–1003). The fate of the Ḥusaynī Sermon there seems to have been similar to that in Cairo, since the sermon is today unknown in Shī'ite villages in the vicinity of Aleppo, just as it is unattested in Cairo today.[38]

The third stage (1171–1882)

During this stage the geographical extent of the Ḥusaynī Sermon regressed to the state it was in before the Būwayhids took over Baghdad, a state in which it remained for many centuries. It survived in Iraq, probably thanks to the fact that the tombs of six of the twelve imāms of Twelver Shī'ism[39] are located in that country, in particular the shrine of Ḥusayn. This was certainly one of the factors which favored the survival of the Ḥusaynī Sermon in Iraq. The fact that the major centers of Shī'ite learning were also located in Iraq (in Baghdad, Najaf, Ḥilla and Karbalā') was probably a contributing factor as well.

In a way the Ḥusaynī Sermon thus reverted to the state it was in before the rise of the Shī'ite states. However, it never lost the elements which were added to it during its period of growth and expansion under Shī'ite rule.

[36] For details see A. Norhedge, "Sāmarrā'", *EI²* (1995), Vol. 8, p. 1041.

[37] For details see Cl. Cahen, "Ayyūbids", *EI²* (1986), Vol. 1, pp. 796–807.

[38] For more details see Ibrāhīm Naṣr Allāh, *Ḥalab wal-tashayyu'* (Mu'assasat al-wafā', 1980.

[39] The six imāms buried in Iraq are: (1) 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (the first imām) in Najaf, 165 km southwest of Baghdad; (2) Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (the third imām) in Karbalā', 100 km southwest of Baghdad; (3) Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Kāẓim (the seventh imām) in Al-Kāẓimiyya, just north of Baghdad; (4) Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Jawwād (the ninth imām) in Al-Kāẓimiyya; (5) 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī (the tenth imām); (7) Al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-'Askarī (the eleventh imām) in Sāmarrā', 120 km north of Baghdad. In addition, there are scores of tombs of imāms' sons who escaped to Kūfa because of 'Abbāsid persecution. For more on this topic see Muḥammad Ḥarz Allāh, *Marāqid al-ma'ārif* (Qumm: Manshūrāt Sa'īd b. Jubayr al-Kāẓimī, 1st printing, 1992); 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn* (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth, no date).

During the long centuries of the third stage the sermon turned into a commemorative rite of the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, one that enabled Shīʿites to give vent to their pain. The main aim of the sermon's preachers during this stage was to arouse their public to tears.

A perusal of the books composed during this period provides clear evidence as to the perceived purpose of the Ḥusaynī Sermon of the times. For example, this is what it says in the introduction to ʿAlī b. Musā b. Jaʿfar b. Ṭāwūs'[40] (d.664 CE) *Al-Lahūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*:[41]

> If only Fāṭima and her father had eyes to see her sons and daughters, dispossessed, wounded, plundered and slaughtered, and the daughters of prophecy with hearts ripped open, grieving over the loss of their beloved ones, their hair flying, coming out of their quarters, striking their cheeks in their misfortune, mourning and wailing, with no protector or guardian. Oh people of sight, discernment and understanding, tell yourselves the story of these children's deaths and cry to God over one and all, help them with love and tears and grieve over their loss of support. For the souls of these kinfolk, wards of the people's ruler, fruit of the Prophet's heart, darlings of the virgin "shining one" [=Fāṭima], and whoever drank with his noble mouth their teeth, and preferred their mother and father over his own.[42]

In the introduction to his book Ibn Ṭāwūs speaks of the duty to cry over the tragedy of Ḥusayn without, however, calling for learning any lesson from what happened to him. The book was recited in commemoration of Ḥusayn at funerals, and shows how the events at Karbalāʾ were perceived in the period in question.

The dominant style at this time was rhymed prose (*sajʿ*).[43]

The following excerpt is taken from *Al-Muntakhab fī jamʿ al-marāthī wal-khuṭab*[44] by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭurayḥī (d. 1674 CE), a book which is still quoted to this day as part of Ḥusaynī Sermons in the Gulf region:

> Oh, Brothers! How can we hide the sighs of sadness? How shall we bear the flames of grief? I wonder if you know what the masters of time made to happen in those places and regions. I swear by the ancient house that a believer, had he thought of the trials and tribulations which befell them, his spirit would surely have left his body! How could it be otherwise, when they, who are the light of God on His earth and in His heaven, God's bosom

[40] For details about him see E. Kohlberg, "Ebn Ṭāwūs", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (California: Mazda, 1998), pp. 55–57; Idem, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and His Library* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 3–17; Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn, "Al-Sayyid Āl Ṭāwūs: ḥayātuhu, muʾallafātuhu, khazānat kutubihi", *Majallat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī* 12 (1965), pp. 84–85.

[41] The book tells the story of Ḥusayn's martyrdom, and of his life before the tragic events at Karbalāʾ. A number of different versions of the book's title exist: *Al-Malhūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭufūf*, *Al-Lahūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭufūf*, *Al-Malhūf ʿalā qatl al-ṭufūf*, *Al-Malhūf ʿalā ahl al-ṭufūf* and *Al-Masālik fī maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, the latter due to the fact that the book is divided into three "masālik" or chapters. The most commonly used title is *Al-Malhūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭufūf*. See ʿAlī b. Jaʿfar b. Ṭāwūs' (d.664 CE) *Al-Malhūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*, edited by Fāris Tabrīziyān "Al-Ḥassūn" (Teheran: Dār al-uswa, 1st printing, 1993), p. 67.

[42] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-Malhūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭufūf*, pp. 84–85.

[43] For more details on rhymed prose in Arabic literature see A. Ben Abdesselem, "Sadjʿ", *EI*² (1995), Vol. 8, pp. 732–738.

[44] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭurayḥī, *Al-Muntakhab fī jamʿ al-marāthī wal-khuṭab*, better known as *Al-Fakhrī* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-aʿlamī lil-maṭbūʿāt, 1992).

> friends and their sons, were driven away, their limbs torn from them, then thrown down on the sand and given the cup of death, on the soil of Al-Óaff.[45]

Here an atmosphere of grief predominates, expressed stylistically in rhymed prose and well-ordered expressions.

Later in the same stage another development occurred, which contributed greatly to consolidate the status of the Ḥusyanī Sermon, especially in Iraq. The most obvious aspect of this development was the appearance of the Ṣafawid[46] state (1502–1722) which extended its control over Iraq as well, including the holy cities of Shīʿism. Thus the Ṣafawid Shāh Ismāʿīl (d. 1523) entered Baghdad in the year 1508, and on the very next day went to Karbalāʾ, performed the rites of pilgrimage there and spent the night secluded in Ḥusayn's tomb.[47]

This event proved to have created a political, military and economic situation that was very favorable to the development and dissemination of the Ḥusaynī Sermon,[48] especially after the Shāh instituted ceremonies to commemorate Ḥusayn's death.[49]

The era of Ṣafawid rule over Iraq was doubtlessly the decisive factor in the continuous survival of the Ḥusaynī Sermon in that country. Had Cairo also undergone a second period of Shīʿite rule after the Fāṭimids the Ḥusaynī Sermon would probably have survived there as well.

The Ṣafawids exploited the Ḥusaynī Sermon as an efficient popular and emotional instrument for the propagation of the Shīʿite creed, which they had adopted and disseminated in Iran.

Interestingly enough, all three views as to the stages of the Ḥusaynī Sermon's development which we reviewed above make no mention at all of this development, which was to prove so significant, in particular for Iraq.

This stage came to an end with the end of the first period of Western colonialism in the Islamic world, when the preachers of the Ḥusaynī Sermon were moved to develop new strategies in order to cope with the new situation. This brings us to the fourth and last stage in the sermon's development.

The fourth stage

The stage starts at the beginning of the twentieth century and is still with us to this day. During this stage the Ḥusaynī Sermon underwent a distinct qualitative development, reflected in a clear broadening of its horizons. Before this stage the sermon did not usually contain anything beyond a retelling of the events at Karbalāʾ, a recital of elegiac poems, some declarations in favor of the renunciation of worldly pleasures, and perhaps also a discussion of some specific historical topic.

But now during the forth stage preachers began introducing a variety of meta-

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[46] For details see R. Darly-Doran, "Ṣafawids", *EI*^{2} (1995), Vol. 3, pp. 765–793.

[47] See Muḥammad Jawwād Mughniyya, *Duwal al-shīʿa fī al-taʾrīkh* (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-ādāb, 1965), p. 122.

[48] See Ṣāliḥ Ibrāhīm al-Shahristānī, *Taʾrīkh al-niyāḥa* (Beirut: Dār al-zahrāʾ, 1998), Vol. 2, p. 32.

[49] See ʿAlī al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya fī taʾrīkh al-ʿirāq al-Ḥadīth* (Qumm: Manshūrāt al-sharīf al-Raḍī, 1st printing, 1993), Vol. 1, p. 59.

physical, ethical and literary topics into their sermons. These include Marxism, Capitalism, rebuttal of attacks on Islam, women's rights in Islam, slavery, the family, the relationship between religion and science, and the significance of Islam as a political or an economic system.

The more a Ḥusaynī preacher demonstrated a grasp of cultural, educational and intellectual topics, the more he was in demand by those in charge of organizing the commemoration ceremonies for Ḥusayn.[50]

During this stage the sermon also developed technically, in the sense that preachers began to insert into their sermons literary and historical quotations, scientific facts and statistics in support of whatever argument they may be developing.

During the sermon the preacher will use every opportunity to link his subject matter to the events at Karbalāʾ. In all cases the sermon ends on that topic. In what follows we provide a detailed description of the structure of contemporary Ḥusaynī sermons.

The structure of the Ḥusaynī Sermon

Preachers of present-day sermons will always be careful to include in them the following six major parts.

A. Opening remarks

In general a Ḥusaynī Sermon will begin with sentences uttered in a special tone, whose style is reminiscent of the way the Qurʾān is recited. Every preacher has his own opening, which always includes a praise of God and a prayer for the Prophet and his family. Ḥusayn will always be mentioned in a special prayer, occasionally together with the names of others who were killed with him.[51] The opening remarks always end with the same fixed phrase used by all Ḥusaynī preachers, "Would that we had been with them (or: with you), then we should have achieved a great success".[52] Recital of this phrase signals to the congregants that the introductory phase of the sermon is over and the second part is about to begin.

The following is an example of the opening remarks of the sermon:

> Praise be to God Lord of the worlds. May God pray for our master Muḥammad and his virtuous family. May God pray for you, my Master, father of ʿAbd Allāh.[53] May God pray for you, oh son of the Prophet of God,[54] God's vast mercy and the gate to the nation's

[50] See the section on "Preachers of the Ḥusaynī Sermon" below.

[51] According to Shīʿite tradition there are seventy-two so-called "Friends of Ḥusayn" (*aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn*) who were killed with him at Karbalāʾ, including members of his own family. The only survivor among them was Ḥusayn's infant son ʿAlī. For more details on the "Friends of Ḥusayn" see, for example, ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿAlī Dukhayyil, *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Dār al-tayyār al-jadīd, 2nd printing, 1985); Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Anṣār al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: Al-Muʾassasa al-dawliyya lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 3rd printing, 1996).

[52] Based on the Qurʾānic verse73:4. Shīʿites consider recital of this verse a certain sign of faith. For more details see Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī, *Kitāb al-tafsīr*, edited and with a commentary by Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (Teheran: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿilmiyya, 1960), 1:257 no. 191; ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (Qumm: Muʾassasat dār al-kitāb, 1983), 1:30.

[53] Agnomen of Ḥusayn, after his elder son ʿAbd Allāh.

salvation. May God pray for you and for the martyrs in your presence. Would that we had been with you, my masters, then we should have attained a mighty good fortune.

Opening remarks of this kind are a recent development. Documented Ḥusaynī Sermons dating from previous stages begin directly with an elegiac poem.

B. The poem

The second part of a Ḥusaynī Sermon consists of an elegy, chosen by the preacher to fit in with the particular occasion on which the sermon is given.

The preacher is expected to know the elegies by heart and to be able to recite them fluently. The recital of the poem always begins in a soft voice, which gradually builds up to end in a loud and rousing tone.

Frequently the preacher ends the poem with a few lines of a popular Iraqi or Bahreini folk elegy in order to arouse the listeners' emotions. These lines are recited in a unique style of their own, interpreted in an individual way by each preacher according to the melodic characteristics of his voice.

The two major compilations of officially used elegies, both ancient and modern, are Muḥsin al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī's *Al-Durr al-naḍīd fī marāthī al-Sibṭ al-shahīd*[55] and Shaykh Ḥusayn ʿAlī al-Balādī al-Baḥrānī's *Riyāḍ al-madḥ wal-rithāʾ lil-sāda al-nujabāʾ*.[56]

In addition, there are numerous existing compilations of elegies in the colloquial Arabic of Iraq, Bahrein, eastern Saudi Arabia and the Arabic-speaking region in Iran, and new ones appear on the market regularly.

Elegiac poems are not a necessary part of a Ḥusaynī Sermon, and in fact are regularly missing from the sermons given during the month of Ramaḍān.[57] The importance attached to elegies differs from one place to another and from one preacher to another. For example, the most well-known contemporary Ḥusaynī preacher, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Wāʾilī,[58] often refrains from reciting any poem at all. When he does decide to use a poem because the circumstances demand it, as on the night of ʿĀshūrāʾ, he limits himself to a few lines read in a gentle voice. Elegies are considered to be an obligatory part of the sermon during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram in the Persian Gulf region and in Lebanon.[59]

[54] One of Ḥusayn's epithets, alluding to his kinship with the Prophet, his grandfather.

[55] Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Al-Durr al-naḍīd fī marāthī al-sibṭ al-shahīd* (Qumm: Manshūrāt al-sharīf al-raḍī, 2000).

[56] Ḥusayn ʿAlī al-Balādī al-Baḥrānī, *Riyāḍ al-Madḥ wal-rithāʾ lil-sāda al-nujabāʾ* (Qumm: Al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1996).

[57] For details on Ramaḍān see M. Plessner, "Ramaḍān", *EI*[2] (1995), Vol. 8, pp. 417–418.

[58] His full name is Shaykh Aḥmad b. Ḥasūn b. Saʿīd al-Laythī al-Wāʾilī al-Najafī, born in Najaf in 1927. A prominent Ḥusaynī preacher, he died in 2003 and was buried in Najaf. For more on him see Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 191–197; Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 361;Ḥaydar al-Marjānī, *Khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī* (Al-Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-qaḍāʾ, 1st printing, 1977), Vol. 1, p. 116; ʿAlī al-Khāqānī, *Shuʿarāʾ al-gharī* (Al-Najaf: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1954), Vol. 1, p. 294; Muḥammad Hādī al-Amīnī, *Maʿa rijāl al-fikr wal-adab fī al-najaf* (No publisher, 1992), Vol. 3, p. 1316.

[59] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 210.

C. The lecture

The lecture part of the Ḥusaynī Sermon usually begins with a Qurʾānic verse, a traditional story quoting the Prophet, an excerpt from the book *Nahj al-balāgha*[60] or a line or two of poetry. The preacher then begins to explain the text and to draw whatever conclusions may be drawn from it from a number of aspects, leading his listeners from one idea to another, each bolstered by quotations from literary or historical works intended to catch the audience's ears and to alleviate the boredom of listening to a lecture. The character of the lecture itself differs from one preacher to another. Some have a preference for modern scientific theories and connect them to Islam, others tend to provide moral guidance and still others tend to speak about historical events, and so on.

*D. The transition (*takhalluṣ*)*[61]

In this, the fourth part of the sermon, the preacher moves from the topic of the lecture to the events at Karbalāʾ, with the express purpose of arousing the audience's tears over Ḥusayn's fate. Preachers take care to make the change from the lecture to the "transition" as smooth as possible, so that the listeners are moved gradually from the atmosphere of the former to the tragic events of the battle.

Shīʿites greatly value a preacher's ability to provide a smooth transition from the lecture to descriptions of the events at Karbalāʾ. For example, a preacher may lecture on the topic of infants and their education in Islam, and then go on to link the end of the lecture with ʿAlī's infant son[62] who was shot with an arrow and killed on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ as he was lying in his father's lap. Next the preacher will describe how Ḥusayn came bearing his child and asking for some water for the infant. The audience is thus taken from the general topic of the lecture, namely children and children's rights in Islam, and led to think about the events of ʿĀshūrāʾ and the killing of one of Ḥusayn's children.

This part of the sermon is also a recent development. The first preacher to have used the *takhalluṣ* in its present form was Shaykh Kāẓim Sabtī[63] (d. 1921). In time and with increasing skill and practice certain preachers came to be known for the

[60] Ascribed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, compiled by Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1009 CE). The book is a collection of ʿAlī's speeches, essays, letters and sayings. For more detail see M. Djebli, "Nahdj Al-Balāgha", *EI*[2] (1993), Vol. 7, pp. 903–904.

[61] On the term *takhalluṣ* in Arabic literature see G.J.H. Van Gelder, "Takhalluṣ", *EI*[2] (2000), Vol. 10, p. 123; Ziyād Ṣāliḥ al-Zuʿbī, "Muṣṭalaḥ al-takhalluṣ fī al-naqd al-ʿarabī al-qadīm", *Dirāsāt islāmiyya*, Islamabad, 29 (1994), p. 81–133; R. Jacobi, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaside* (Wiesbaden, 1971), pp. 49–65.

[62] His name was ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, nicknamed "Al-Aṣghar" ("The Smaller One") to distinguish him from his elder brother. He was killed in the battle of Karbalāʾ although still an infant, the youngest person to have died with Ḥusayn. Only six months old, he was killed by Ḥirmala b. Kāhila or Kāhil al-Asadī. For more details see Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, p. 328; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar b. Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl* (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 2nd printing, 1947), p. 574; idem, *Al-Lahūf ʿalā qatlā al-ṭufūf* (Teheran: Dār al-ʿālam (Jahān) lil-nashr, 1929), pp. 117, 123; Najm al-Dīn Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-aḥzān wa-munīr subul al-ashjān* (Qumm: Madrasat al-imām al-mahdī, 3rd printing, 1985), p. 73.

[63] His full name is Kāẓim Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Sabtī al-Najafī al-Sahlānī al-Ḥimyarī. He was born in Najaf 1848 and became a prominent Ḥusaynī preacher. For more detail see Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 181–184.

quality of their "transitions", which Shīʿites appreciate for their artistic merit and emotional intensity. Among revolutionary Shīʿite groups the *takhalluṣ* is especially used in order to effect a transition to the desert of Karbalāʾ and the battle there, which then serves them as a source of inspiration and a starting point for disseminating the idea of martyrdom. When such a Shīʿite dies his relatives and companions meet and turn to speaking about Karbalāʾ, Ḥusayn and other Shīʿite martyrs.[64]

In popular circles in Iraq and the Persian Gulf the word *karīz*, meaning transition, is used instead of *takhalluṣ*. Some Ḥusaynī preachers explain the origins of the word folk-etymologically as deriving from classical Arabic *qarīḍ* (= poetry) which, losing its emphatic qualities in the popular pronunciation became *karīz*. The preachers claim that the classical word is appropriate in this context because the *takhalluṣ* is generally followed by some lines of classical Arabic elegiac poetry or *qarīḍ*.[65]

E. The disaster

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, originally the Ḥusaynī Sermon consisted simply of a commemorative retelling of the tragic events surrounding the battle of Karbalāʾ and the death of Ḥusayn and his family and companions, together with a recital of appropriate elegies in order to move the audience to tears and grief.

This element of the sermon still remains, but in contemporary versions it has been moved to the sermon's end, where the preacher is duty-bound to mention the painful happenings at Karbalāʾ, embellishing his descriptions with appropriate lines of verse in classical and colloquial Arabic, recited in a special manner aimed at arousing the listeners' pity.

A very large number of elegiac poems have been accumulated and recorded over the years. These describe in minute detail many of the events of that fateful day, including what happened to Ḥusayn himself, to his family and companions, as well as to his wives after the battle, thus helping the preachers choose the event or events they will discuss in any particular sermon. In fact, there exist one or more elegies[66] for every event from Ḥusayn's journey to Mecca[67] from Al-Madīna[68] until the events of Karbalāʾ itself, and the return of his wives to Al-Madīna.

In this part of the sermon the preacher has a chance to demonstrate his rhetorical abilities, and to describe the events at Karbalāʾ in a way that arouses his listeners' compassion. The greater a preacher's skills at agitating his audience and moving it to tears, the more popular he will be and the greater will be the demand for his services.

F. The invocation

This is the last part of a Ḥusaynī Sermon, in which the preacher asks for God's mercy on the wise men of the Shīʿites and those present at the sermon, with an occa-

[64] For further detail see Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, p. 90.

[65] A prominent preacher who held this opinion was ʿAbd al-Zahrāʾ al-Kaʿbī al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1994), author of *Maṣādir nahj al-balāgha wa-asānīduhu*.

[66] See fn. 22 above.

[67] For details on Mecca see D.A. King, "Mekka", *EI*² (1991), Vol. 6, pp. 144–187.

[68] For details on Al-Madīna see R.B. Winder, "Al-Madīna", *EI*² (1986), Vol. 6, pp. 994–1007.

sional special prayer for those who make financial contributions, ending in a recital of the opening chapter of the Qurʾān (*Al-Fātiḥa*) dedicated to the deceased and to all believing Muslims. The precise text of this part of the sermon differs from one preacher to another.

The topics with which the contemporary Ḥusaynī Sermon deals

Today's sermon is no longer limited to an emotional retelling of the events at Karbalāʾ. In fact, the death of Ḥusayn has become no more than a headline, while the sermon's contents now encompass a broad range of topics.[69] One of the reasons for this may be the fact that there are so many competing Ḥusaynī preachers today, each of whom wants to demonstrate his special skills and abilities.

Among the topics that are dealt with in the sermons are the following.

A. Information about Islam, its history, literature, exegesis of the Qurʾān, the Prophet's biography and that of the first Muslims, and the biographies of the twelve Shīʿite imāms. This proliferation of topics has brought about a great increase in the frequency and extent of the Ḥusaynī Sermon and a corresponding increase in the number of preachers. Shīʿites are particularly fond of hearing such sermons during the months of Muḥarram and Ramaḍān.

In fact, some Shīʿites during the month of Ramaḍān move from one sermon to another, listening to the words of preacher after preacher. This is possible due to the fact that during Ramaḍān the sermons are preached continuously from after the dawn prayer until late at night, in every mosque, as well as in *ḥusayniyya* shrines,[70] open squares and private homes.[71]

The proliferation of the Ḥusaynī Sermon together with the ever-increasing diversity and better education of the preachers have resulted in raising the educational level of the Shīʿite man-in-the-street.

B. The sermon's educational and ethical function: the Ḥusaynī Sermon undoubtedly plays an important role in educating Shīʿites and increasing their adherence to Shīʿite doctrine. Many Shīʿites have become more observant in their religion thanks to hearing these sermons from preachers who are experts at convincing members of their congregations to uphold the tenets of their faith, using such stories as Ḥusayn himself did not missing a single prayer even on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ itself despite the upcoming battle. In such a manner the Ḥusaynī Sermon has become an instrument for instruction on the dos and don'ts of the Shīʿite faith.[72]

C. The sermon's social role: The occasion of listening to a Ḥusaynī Sermon brings together Shīʿites of diverse classes, who converse, cooperate and get to know each other. In addition, as part of the sermon the preachers call on Shīʿites to help the

[69] See Aḥmad al-Wāʾilī, *Tajāribī maʿa al-minbar* (Beirut: Dār al-zahrāʾ, 1st printing, 1988), p. 43; al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 317.

[70] For details about these shrines see the section on "*Ḥusayniyya* shrines" below.

[71] In the autobiography of a prominent citizen of Najaf he claims to have attended more than twenty sessions during a single ʿĀshūrāʾ day. For details see al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 318.

[72] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 320–321.

poor and needy and to give alms for the sake of Ḥusayn.[73] Many are the poor who are given assistance on these occasions, and many the mosques that have been built thanks to the sermons. It is a common practice today for the managers of charities to urge Ḥusaynī preachers to call on their audiences to contribute to these charities, either immediately on ascending the podium or as part of the lecture.

Some Ḥusaynī Sermons are intended for particular groups, such as members of a certain profession, the residents of a certain quarter, or members of certain tribes, with the aim of enhancing the faith and increasing godliness among the people.[74]

D. The political role

It is the Shīʿite view that Ḥusayn died fighting against Umayyad injustice and tyranny. As a result political parties in some Shīʿite countries have exploited the great popular empathy toward Ḥusayn and the admiration of his struggle against oppression in order to disseminate their ideologies and draw young people into their ranks, using the argument that they are fighting evil just as did the movement led by Ḥusayn.[75]

Some political parties have also exploited the Ḥusaynī Sermon for purposes of propaganda and a call for *jihad*, arguing that Ḥusayn's actions had a political and *jihad* dimension, for he refused to pledge his allegiance to the caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya[76] (d. 683) and left Al-Madīna for Mecca, then continued on to Iraq, fought and was killed in a struggle against iniquity.

Occasionally we find that a Ḥusaynī preacher criticizes the current political situation. For example, in Iran such preachers played a crucial role in revolutionizing the masses and turning them against the Shah's regime. It is therefore not surprising that the imām Khomeini would state repeatedly that "whatever we have we owe to ʿĀshūrāʾ".[77]

In Iraq Ḥusaynī preachers played a prominent role in the struggle against British colonialism, which in that country began in 1914. The Shīʿite religious authorities in Najaf immediately gave a ruling requiring all believers to fight the British in a holy war and to support the Ottoman state, whereupon preachers of Ḥusaynī Sermons quickly disseminated this ruling among Shīʿites and called on them to join the *jihad*, using the story of Ḥusayn as the basis for their call.[78]

When the Communists ruled Iraq Ḥusaynī preachers were very influential in turn-

[73] See Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Iqnāʿ al-lāʾim ilā iqāmat al-maʾātim* (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-maʿārif al-islāmiyya, 1st printing), p. 318.

[74] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 322.

[75] One such political movement is the Iraqi *Daʿwa* party, founded in 1957 by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, whose platform makes explicit mention of its support for religious ceremonies, especially those connected with the events at Karbalāʾ. For details see Shumrān al-ʿIjlī, *Al-Khāriṭa al-siyāsiyya lil-muʿāraḍa al-ʿirāqiyya* (London: Dār al-Ḥikma, 2002), p. 176; The Islamic Daʿwa Party, *Thaqāfat al-daʿwa al-islāmiyya* (1st printing, 1984), Chapter on Organization, Vol. 1, p. 282.

[76] For details on this caliph see G.R. Hawting, "Yazīd (I) B. Muʿāwiya", *EI*[2] (2002), Vol. II, pp. 309–311.

[77] See, for example, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh, *Min waḥy ʿĀshūrāʾ* (Beirut: Dār al-malāk, 1st printing, 1996), p. 72; Rūḥ Allāh al-Mūsawī al-Khomeini, *Nahḍat ʿĀshūrāʾ* (Beirut: Dār al-wasīla, 1996), p. 115; Haggai Ram, "The Model of Karbalāʾ: Founding Myth and Mass Mobilization in Iran's Islamic Revolution", *Zemanim* 62 (1998), pp. 50–58 [Hebrew].

[78] See, for example, *Hākadhā raʾaytuhum* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-maʿārif, 1st printing, 2002), p. 17.

ing Shīʿites against that ideology, in particular after the religious rulings of Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm,[79] in which he declared that Communism constituted an atheistic heresy.[80]

In Lebanon the Ḥusaynī Sermon played an important part in the struggle against the Israeli military presence in the south of the country. Preachers utilized the mass meetings at which they preached and the deep sense of empathy with the story of Ḥusayn's murder to incite Shīʿites to resist and wage *jihad*. Preachers would compare the position Ḥusayn found himself in and that of contemporary Shīʿism. This is what Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh, the present leader of Hezbollah, says on the subject: "We do not mention Abū Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn and Karbalāʾ only when a martyr of the Resistance falls, but also when we assault forts and sow our flags on the highest peaks".[81]

The Ḥusaynī Sermon of the year 2003 was exploited in Lebanon quite explicitly for the purpose of expressing support for the intifada in the West Bank and Gaza, and at the 10th of Muḥarram processions were used for the same purpose.[82]

In short, the Ḥusaynī Sermon has today been transformed into a rallying point of revolutionary sentiment among Shīʿites.

Occasions on which the Ḥusaynī Sermon is preached

Today the sermon may be preached on almost any day of the year, as part of various religious and social activities. The establishment of Ḥusaynī shrines (*ḥusayniyya*) certainly played a key role in the dissemination and growing popularity of these sermons. In fact, there are currently Shīʿite areas where they are a daily occurrence throughout the year. This is the case in the Ḥusaynī shrines in Kuwait, Bahrein, the eastern part of Saudi Arabia and Oman.

A contributing factor to the sermon's increasing popularity is the fact that Ḥusaynī preachers have become involved in the general concerns of the Shīʿite populace. The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran[83] (1978–79) was especially significant in this respect. Another factor which should not be overlooked is the general trend toward greater piety and godliness, and attending a Ḥusaynī Sermon is considered in Shīʿism to be a very meritorious act.

The occasions on which Ḥusaynī Sermons are given can be divided into two main categories.

[79] Born in Najaf in 1934 into a devout Shīʿite family. For details on him see www.alhakeem.com/arabic/alhakeem/sira/02.htm.

[80] See ʿĀdil Raʾūf, *Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr bayna diktātūriyyatayni* (Damascus: Al-Markaz al-ʿirāqī lil-iʿlām wal-dirāsāt, 2001), document no. 23, p. 466.

[81] Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh, *Ḥadīth ʿĀshūrāʾ* (Beirut: Dār al-ṣafwa, 1st printing, 2000), p. 257.

[82] Al-Kāzimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 330.

[83] For more on the Islamic Revolution in Iran see N.R. Keddie, *Root of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), Chapters 2–3; R.W. Cottam, "The Iranian Revolution", in J.R.I. Cole and N.R. Keddie (eds.), *Shīʿism and Social Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); S.A. Arjomand, "Iran's Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective", *World Politics* (April, 1986); N.R. Keddie and E. Hooglund (eds.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Islamic Republic* (Washington DC: Middle East Institute in cooperation with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1982).

Gatherings[84] *on public occasions*

*A. Gatherings (*majālis*) of the month of Muḥarram*:[85] this is the high season for Ḥusaynī Sermons, in particular the first ten days of the month, called "the days of ʿĀshūrāʾ".

B. Gatherings of the month of Ṣafar:[86] Sermons continue on, into and through this month as well, because this is the month in which the "procession of captives"[87] (*rakb al-sabāyā*) journeyed from Karbalāʾ to Kūfa[88] and thence to Damascus, after Ḥusayn's death. On the twentieth of the month, in the year 61 AH, Ḥusayn's head was returned to Karbalāʾ and buried in the grave where his body lay.[89]

C. Gatherings of the month of Ramaḍān:[90] the gatherings of this month are the second best-attended, after those of the month of Muḥarram. Ḥusaynī Sermons of this month are usually devoted to Qurʾānic, educational and historical concepts, and are in general attended by the more pious, unlike the sermons of Muḥarram, which are frequented by all Shīʿites, whatever the depth of their religious feelings.[91]

D. Gatherings on the anniversaries of the deaths of the Prophet, Fāṭima[92] and the twelve imāms: the Ḥusaynī Sermons on these occasions open with a poem dedicated to the specific personage to whom the sermon is dedicated. After the recital of the poem the preacher goes on to speak of that person's death or torments, finally moving on to describe the events surrounding Ḥusayn's death at Karbalāʾ.[93]

[84] The word *majālis* in this context refers to gatherings for listening to spiritual exhortations, elegies and Ḥusaynī Sermons. They may also include acts of mourning and dramatic performances that recapitulate scenes of the Battle of Karbalāʾ. For more details see Jawād Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, trans. by Khalīl Zāmil al-ʿIṣāmī (Beirut: Dār al-rasūl al-akram and Dār al-maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ, 1st printing, 1997), p. 402.

[85] For more on the month of Muḥarram see M. Plessner, "Muḥarram", *EI*² (1993), Vol. 7, p. 462.

[86] For more on the month of Ṣafar see A.J. Wensinck, "Ṣafar", *EI*² (1995), Vol. 8, pp. 764–765.

[87] The captives in question were Ḥusayn's sisters, wives and other female relatives who were captured, taken from Karbalāʾ to Damascus and presented to the caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya (d. 683 CE). For more details see Khalid Sindawi, *The Maqātil in Shīʿite Literature*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2000), pp. 215–218 [Hebrew].

[88] For details on the city see H. Djait, "Al-Kūfa", *EI*² (1986), Vol. 5, p. 345.

[89] Ḥusayn's head was returned to be buried with his body forty days after his death, on the twentieth day of the month of Ṣafar. This day is commemorated by Shīʿites under the name of "pilgrimage of the fortieth day" or "pilgrimage of the return of the head". The pilgrimage constitutes one of the five distinguishing features (*alāma*) which characterize the Shīʿite believer. For more details on the ceremonies of this pilgrimage and the way they are performed see, for example, ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* (Beirut: Dār al-mujtabā, 1st printing, 1995), pp. 503–510; M. Ayoub, "ʾarbaʿīn", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 2, p. 276.

For more details on the five distinguishing features of the Shīʿite believer see, for example, Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 4th printing, 1945), Vol. 6, p. 52 no. 37; Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl* (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 2nd printing, 1947), p. 589; Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, *Wasāʾl al-shīʿa* (Qumm: Muʾassasat āl al-bayt li-iḥyāʾ al-turāth, 1st printing, 1988), Vol. 5, p. 81 no. 49.

[90] See M. Plessner, "Ramaḍān", *EI*² (1995), Vol. 8, pp. 417–418.

[91] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 230.

[92] For details on Fāṭima see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Fāṭima", *EI*² (1991), Vol. 2, pp. 841–850.

[93] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 231.

Gatherings on private occasions

Such gatherings are held on an occasion associated with a certain person or the group holding the sermon. Possible occasions are the following:

A. Habitual weekly gatherings: these are attended by specific, usually socially prominent, Shīʿites, and are often held after the evening prayer, although some are also held in the morning or afternoon. Every such gathering is held on a certain day of the week, attended by a circumscribed and more-or-less constant group of people, for whom it serves as a social occasion as well as providing an opportunity to discuss religious matters, especially if attended by religious masters.[94] Thus, for example, each of the chief religious authorities in Najaf,[95] Qumm[96] and other Shīʿite cities will have his own weekly gathering.

B. Gatherings in commemoration of the deceased: it has become a common Shīʿite custom to end the period of mourning for the dead with a recital of Qurʾānic verses, followed by a Ḥusaynī Sermon. In this sermon the preacher first speaks of the dead and of the world beyond, then goes on to mention the tragic fate of Ḥusayn or another member of the Prophet's family, with whom the fate of the deceased can be connected.[97]

C. Gatherings on other occasions: Ḥusaynī Sermons can also be heard on various other occasions, among them moving into new house, returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, fulfillment of a religious obligation, or any other joyful event. In recent years it has become common for Ḥusaynī preachers to accompany groups of pilgrims to Mecca. The sermons of this type usually cater mainly to devout Shīʿites and are organized by the person who is celebrating the occasion in question.[98]

Venues of the Ḥusaynī Sermon

Ḥusaynī Sermons may be given at variety of different places, as follows.

A. Mosques

As we say above in our historical survey of the Ḥusaynī Sermon's development, mosques were used as the sermon venue at least since Fāṭimid times, when certain mosques in Cairo were used for this purpose on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, such as the Cairo Mosque, the Mosque of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, the Great Mosque of al-Azhar, and others.[99]

[94] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 232–233.

[95] For details on the city of Najaf see E. Honigmann – [C.E. Bosworth], "Al-Nadjaf", *EI²* (1993), Vol. 7, pp. 859–861.

[96] For details on the city see J. Calmard, "Ḳumm", *EI²* (1986), Vol. 5, pp. 369–372.

[97] For details see Ḥasan Amīn al-Buʿaynī, *Al-ʿĀdāt wal-taqālīd fī lubnān* (Beirut: Bīsān lil-nashr wal-tawzīʿ wal-iʿlām, 2001), p. 122.

[98] For details see Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 170–172.

[99] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 247.

B. The tombs of Shīʿite imāms

The tombs of the imāms are holy shrines, and are among the most frequently used venues for Ḥusaynī Sermons. Ḥusayn's tomb in Karbalāʾ was naturally one of the first places where elegies were recited and the tragic tale of his death told, since the times of the *tawwābūn*,[100] through both the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods, and down to our own day and age.

Similarly, the shrines of other imāms are also used as venues for the sermons. These include tombs in Najaf and Kāẓimiyya[101] in Iraq, the city of Mashhad[102] in Iran, to the tomb of Zaynab,[103] ʿAlī's daughter, in Damascus,[104] and scores of other tombs in Iraq and Iran ascribed to the imāms' offspring.

*C. Ḥusaynī shrines (*ḥusayniyya*)*

These are structures erected for the express purpose of holding Ḥusaynī Sermons and the annual mourning ceremonies in honor of Ḥusayn.[105] The Ḥusaynī shrines inside the holy Shīʿite cities usually also serve as free-of-charge hostels for pilgrims.[106] The shrine is commonly named after the community which erected it: "The Aṣfahanī *ḥusayniyya*", "The Teheran *ḥusayniyya*", and so forth. *Ḥusayniyyas* of this kind may be found in Najaf, Karbalāʾ, Mashhad and other cities. They are not considered mosques, and are thus exempt from the various restrictions[107] which apply to the latter, especially with regard to entry by non-Muslims.[108]

In some areas of Lebanon the shrines are known by the name of "Ḥusaynī club" (*al-nādī al-ḥusaynī*), as for example the shrine in Tyre[109] in southern Lebanon, and elsewhere. In contrast, in the Persian Gulf area, in Bahrein, eastern Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and Oman, the shrines are called "funereal assemblies" (*maʾtam*). In Bahrein alone there exist today some 3500 such "Ḥusaynī funereal assemblies",[110] reflecting the fact that in that country Ḥusaynī Sermons take place with great fre-

[100] Literally "the penitent", this was a group of Kūfan Shīʿites who felt contrition for not having fought side-by-side with Ḥusayn and decided to do penitence and take revenge for his death. Their rebellion, under the leadership of Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Khuzāʿī (d. 684 CE) culminated in the battle of ʿAyn al-Warda. For more details on the movement see, for example, G.R. Hawting, "The Tawwābūn: Atonement and ʿĀshūrāʾ", *JSAI* 17 (1994), pp. 166–181.

[101] For details on the city see M. Streck – A.A. Dixon, "Ḳāẓimayn", *EI*² (1990), Vol. 4, pp. 854–856.

[102] For details see M. Steck, "Mashhad", *EI*² (1991), Vol. 6, pp. 713–716.

[103] For details see Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-Aʿlām* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm lil-malāyīn, 7th printing, 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 66–67.

[104] For details on Damascus see N. Elisséeff, "Dimashḳ", *EI*² (1991), Vol. 2, pp. 277–291.

[105] For details see Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Thawrat al-Ḥusayn fī al-wujdān al-shaʿbī* (Beirut: Al-Dār al-islāmiyya, 1st printing, 1980), p. 219; Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 219.

[106] Jawād Muḥaddithī is of the opinion that the preference shown by Shīʿites for Ḥusaynī shrines, particularly during the early centuries of Islam, was due to the fact that mosques were controlled by the authorities, who were more often than not hostile to Shīʿism and curbed the free practice of their religion. For details see Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, p. 143.

[107] For more details on rules governing comportment in mosques see Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ al-Khuḍayrī, *Aḥkām al-masjid fī al-sharīʿa al-islāmiyya* (Riyadh: Dār al-faḍīla lil-nashr, 2001).

[108] Muḥaddithī, op.cit., pp. 142–143.

[109] For details on the city of Tyre see M. Lavergne, "Ṣūr", *EI*² (1997), Vol. 9, pp. 883–885.

[110] See Maḥrūs Karīm, *Al-Nūr Magazine* 50 (London, 1995), p. 42.

quency and on numerous occasions. In India and Pakistan they are called "Imām Centers" (*imām bāra*).

*Ḥusayniyya*s do not possess a uniform style or shape. In Iraq, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf area they are usually great mosque-like halls, whereas in Lebanon they tend to be constructed in the shape of meeting halls, with rows of chairs and a podium at one end. Some shrines are used exclusively by women. A *ḥusayniyya* may be constructed as a separate building, or as an annex to a mosque.

Among Shīʿites the Ḥusaynī shrine is second only to the mosque in importance.

The oldest extant shrine is the "Imām Dālān *ḥusayniyya*" in the city of Dacca in Bangladesh, which dates from 1642 CE.[111]

Ḥusaynī shrines may be classified into two distinct types:

1) Shrines constructed in cities and towns where Shīʿites live. This type is common in all Shīʿite countries and areas around the world.

2) Shrines in the holy cities of Shiʿism. These usually also serve as hostels for pilgrims from the towns which had them constructed. The most important holy place is, of course, Karbalāʾ, in which a number of such hostel-cum-shrines have been constructed.[112]

With time the shrines have taken on an increasing religious, social, political and cultural importance. Since the beginning of the twentieth century they have turned into social and cultural clubs where people come to exchange views and engage in social and recreational activities, in particular during religious holidays.[113]

D. Private homes

Some Ḥusaynī Sermons are held in the preacher's private home, or in the home of the person who has an occasion for holding the sermon. Private homes were among the earliest venues of the Ḥusaynī Sermon.[114]

E. Streets and public squares

Due to the growing popularity of Ḥusaynī Sermons, especially during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram, the sermon is often given out in the street or in a public square. Occasionally traffic is halted on certain streets during the time of the sermon. This happens most frequently in Bahrein and eastern Saudi Arabia. In Lebanon it can happen as well, especially in the southern parts of Beirut as well as in some towns and villages in the Buqāʿ and in the south of the country.

F. Leased halls

Venues are leased for the purpose of holding Ḥusaynī Sermons in various locations around the world, especially in cities where there is no mosque or Islamic center.

[111] Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaydarī, *Trāgīdīyā Karbalāʾ* (Beirut: Dār al-sāqī, 1st printing, 1999), p. 162.
[112] Salmān Hādī Ṭuʿma, *Karbalāʾ fī al-dhākira* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿānī, 1988), p. 180.
[113] See Al-Ḥaydarī, *Trāgīdīyā Karbalāʾ*, p. 69.
[114] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 255.

*G. Large tents (*surādiq*)*

In some Shīʿite areas tents are used as venues for the Ḥusaynī Sermon. In the tribal areas of Iraq Shīʿite tribes set up tents for the mourning ceremonies and sermons of the days of ʿĀshūrāʾ. In recent years tents have come into use in Lebanon as well, in Beirut and elsewhere, in particular for the ʿĀshūrāʾ ceremonies organized by the Hezbollah and Amal movements, which attract great crowds that no mosque or *ḥusayniyya* can contain. As a result the term "ʿĀshūrāʾ tent" is now in common use among Shīʿites in Lebanon.[115]

H. Public transportation

On railroad trains traveling from southern Iraq to Karbalāʾ and on buses making the trip to Karbalāʾ from Baghdad and elsewhere passengers are reminded of the tragedy of Karbalāʾ and can listen to recitals and elegies, in particular on the occasions of regular pilgrimage,[116] such as ʿĀshūrāʾ, the middle of the month of Shaʿbān,[117] etc. The Ḥusaynī Sermon on public transportation is usually short, with no lectures, and sometimes consists merely of the recital of an elegy. On one occasion at least, so it has been reported, a Ḥusaynī preacher on a flight from Damascus to Teheran asked the crew's permission to recite elegiac slogans in honor of Ḥusayn over the aircraft's public-address system and his wish was granted.[118] The phenomenon of reciting the sermon on means of public transport would appear to be limited to Iraq and Iran.[119]

I. Markets

As mentioned previously, Ḥusaynī Sermons used to be given in some of the markets of Baghdad, run by associations of various crafts. Thus, for example, there were gatherings for the purpose of hearing Ḥusaynī Sermons in the merchants' bazaar, others in the taylors' market, and so on.

*J. Religious schools (*madrasa*)*

In the religious schools of Shīʿite holy cities such as Najaf, Qumm and Mashhad, the students organize gatherings to mourn over Ḥusayn, with sermons preached by one of their own or by a student from another school.[120]

[115] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 257.

[116] The full list of regular annual occasions is as follows: the pilgrimage of ʾĀshūrāʾ, the end of the forty days of mourning (the twentieth of the month of Ṣafar), the middle of the month of Rajab, the middle of the month of Shaʿbān, the "night of fate" (*laylat al-qadr*), *ʿīd al-fiṭr*, the night of *ʿarafa* and the Feast of Sacrifice (*ʿīd al-aḍḥā*). For more details on these pilgrimages see ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* (Beirut: Dār al-mujtabā, 1st printing, 1995), pp. 474–504.

[117] For details concerning this month see A.J. Wensinck, "Shaʿbān", *EI*[2] (1997), Vol. 9, p. 154.

[118] Perhaps this shows the influence of flights taking pilgrims to Mecca, on which they constantly repeat the phrase "I am at your service, oh God, I am at your service" (*labbayka Allāhumma labbayka*) throughout the flight. For details see H. Lazarus-Yaffeh, "The Ḥajj – the duty of pilgrimage", in *More Conversations about Islam* (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 3rd edition, 1992), p. 12 [Hebrew].

[119] For more details see Fahmī Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-ahrām lil-targama wal-nashr, 2nd printing, 1987), p. 222.

[120] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 258–259.

Who initiates and organizes the performance of a Ḥusaynī Sermon?

Those who issue the call to attend a Ḥusaynī Sermon can be various people and organizations. For example, in the case of private Ḥusaynī Sermons, of the kind mentioned above, the person sponsoring the occasion will issue the call to the sermon. Among those who can be expected to issue invitations to a Ḥusaynī Sermon are the following.

A. Imāms of mosques, heads or the board of directors of ḥusayniyyas

For a Ḥusaynī gathering these religious leaders will make the choice of an appropriate preacher and make all other necessary preparations, such as lighting, furniture and refreshments, in accordance with local custom.

B. Families of Shīʿite clerics

Such families will organize gatherings in honor of their sons. These are attended by people of all classes, but in particular elders of the community, religious scholars and students at religious schools. They are usually held in the holy cities of Shīʿism, where most Shīʿite religious schools and academies are located.[121]

C. Shīʿite notables

Local and regional Shīʿite notables and prominent leaders also organize Ḥusaynī Sermons, especially during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram. The costs of holding the gatherings are defrayed by these men personally, not by the extended family or a committee, and they also choose the preacher.[122]

D. Shīʿite neighborhoods

In the Shīʿite areas of Iraq, as well as elsewhere in regions with a considerable Shīʿite population, Ḥusaynī Sermons are frequently organized by an entire neighborhood, usually in a low-income area. The local people will issue the call for a gathering, choose the preacher and make the necessary arrangements. The venue will usually be a public space or a major crossroads in the neighborhood. Mats are spread on the ground, with some people bringing their own, loudspeakers are placed on the rooftops and the podium is placed so that it overlooks the audience.

[121] Such gatherings are especially typical of the city of Najaf, where the gatherings of the imām Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm were particularly renowned. These gatherings, held throughout the imām's lifetime, were attended by clerics and leading social, intellectual and political personalities. For details see Ibrāhīm ʿAdnān al- Sarrāj, *Al-Imām al-sayyid Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm* (Beirut: Dār al-zahrāʾ, 1st printing, 1993), p. 16.

There are also gatherings organized by laymen, such as those initiated by Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (d. 1797 CE), who began holding them in his home. They are still being held today, organized by his descendants, and are considered among the most important and well-attended Ḥusaynī gatherings during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram, when they constitute the last of the morning gatherings, ending near noon. For details see al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 238.

[122] For details see ʿAlī al-Wardī, *Dirāsa fī ṭabīʿat al-mujtamaʿ al-ʿirāqī* (Qumm: Manshūrāt al-sharīf al-Raḍī, 1993), p. 237.

E. Professional groups

Various labor unions, craft guilds and other professional organizations (for example cloth merchants, corn merchants, tailors, weavers, and so on) organize Ḥusaynī gatherings, especially in Iraq but also in other Shīʿite areas.[123] Markets and bazaars have thus become venues of Ḥusaynī Sermons.

F. Tribes and clans

Every Shīʿite tribe and clan in Iraq holds Ḥusaynī Sermons, usually inside large hair tents. The chief of the tribe or clan supervises the organization of the gathering and chooses the preacher shortly before the beginning of the month of Muḥarram. The preacher is usually a guest in the home of the chief. All members of the tribe participate in providing refreshments to the public attending the sermon.[124]

G. People from a city who are residing in other cities

In Iraq in particular many people move from the city in which they were born and raised, mostly to Baghdad but to other towns as well, where they often cooperate in organizing Ḥusaynī Sermons. Thus, for example, people from the city of Samāwa who live in Baghdad hold Ḥusaynī Sermons,[125] as do originators of Baghdad living in Karbalāʾ.[126]

H. Shīʿite émigré communities in non-Muslim countries

Shīʿite communities in the West also attach great importance to holding Ḥusaynī Sermons, in particular during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram. The sermons are usually organized by the director of the local Islamic center and other community leaders, who choose the preacher, and make arrangements for his entry visa, lodgings and expenses.

I. Political organizations

There are currently a number of political organizations active among Shīʿites who utilize Ḥusaynī Sermons to attract adherents. The involvement of a political grouping in the organization of a sermon may be overt or kept a secret, depending on the social and political circumstances in the country in question.[127] In Lebanon, for example, the two major Shīʿite political movements, Amal and Hezbollah, quite openly organize Ḥusaynī Sermons in all areas of the country with a significant Shīʿite presence, including in Beirut, southern Lebanon and the Buqāʿ Valley. At these gatherings signs with party slogans abound, and the occasion is exploited to make the movement's stand on current issues known.[128]

[123] For details see Aḥmad al-Wāʾilī, *Tajāribī maʿa al-minbar* (Beirut: Dār al-zahrāʾ, 1st printing, 1998), p. 48.
[124] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 241.
[125] A city on the edge of the desert on the banks of the Euphrates about 220 km south of Baghdad.
[126] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 241.
[127] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 242–243.
[128] For details see Al-Buʿaynī, *Al-ʿĀdāt wal-taqālīd fī lubnān*, p. 131.

Each of the two political movements issues a call to attend its gatherings and chooses its own preachers, but occasionally they also agree to hold gatherings in common. In other countries the situation is similar.

J. Sermons for youths and children

Ḥusaynī Sermons arranged for children are known by the name of "youth (or children's) gatherings (or processions)" (*majālis/mawākib al-shabāb/al-aṭfāl*). These are usually organized for the children of a number of neighborhoods. The expenses are covered by contributions, and preachers often agree to do their work *pro bono*. Children's gatherings are frequently named after youths or children who were killed at Karbalāʾ, such as ʿAlī al-Akbar[129] son of Ḥusayn, Al-Qāsim[130] son of Ḥasan, or ʿAbd Allāh al-Aṣghar.[131]

The Ḥusaynī preacher: titles and skills

A Ḥusaynī preacher can be defined as a religious orator who possesses the combined abilities to lecture and preach, to recite elegiac poetry in a certain manner, and to make his audience become emotionally involved in the story of Ḥusayn and his tragic death. He thus must have the skills of any orator or preacher, supplemented by an aptitude for speaking of the battle of Karbalāʾ in a way that arouses feelings of sadness in his audience.[132]

Titles of the Ḥusaynī preacher

Ḥusaynī preachers are called by many different titles, some specific to certain Shīʿite regions and others in more general use. The titles are as follows:

*A. Preacher of the Ḥusaynī podium (*khaṭīb al-minbar al-ḥusaynī*)*: This is the preacher's official name. Although this name is usually shortened to the first word in the expression (see the second title, below) both in popular and in religious usage, the full title appears in all scholarly writings and books about the Ḥusaynī Sermon.

*B. Preacher (*al-khaṭīb*)*: This is the title most commonly used by Shīʿites. This word is in general use in Arabic with the meaning of "preacher", and has no connection at all with Ḥusayn when uttered in a non-Shīʿite context. However, when a Shīʿite says "he is a *khaṭīb*" or "the *khaṭīb* has arrived" it can only refer to a Ḥusaynī preacher. It is the usual title used at the major Ḥusaynī gatherings in the cities of Iraq and the Persian Gulf, as well as those of Shīʿite émigrés from these regions.[133]

*C. Reciter (*qāriʾ *or* qārī*)*: This is the title used by the common people, who frequently utter it in the colloquial form, in which the glottal stop is dropped. The title is

[129] Al-Ziriklī, *Al-Aʿlām*, Vol. 7, p. 277; Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, pp. 328–329..
[130] Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, p. 355.
[131] Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, p. 306.
[132] Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 151; al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 260–261.
[133] Muḥaddithī, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, pp. 156–160.

most frequently heard at popular gatherings in Iraq, the Gulf States and in the Arabic-speaking areas of southern Iran.[134]

*D. Podium speaker (*minbarī*)*: The word *minbar* means podium, and the term *minbarī* when used by Shīʿites can only refer to the preacher of Ḥusaynī Sermons. The term is frequently used by Shīʿite clerics and religious scholars, for the purpose of differentiating between their own self-perceived higher position and the status of a Ḥusaynī preacher.

*E. Reciter of the biography of Ḥusayn (*qāriʾ [*or* muqriʾ] al-sīra al-ḥusayniyya*)*

*F. Reciter of mourning (*qāriʾ al-ʿazāʾ*)*

*G. Reciter of the mourning gathering (*qāriʾ majlis ʿazāʾ*)*

*H. Consoler (*al-muʿazzī*)*
The titles listed above are all in use in Lebanon and in some of the Shīʿite areas of Syria, especially in the vicinity of Homs[135] and Aleppo.[136] They are not in use either in Iraq or in the Gulf States.

*I. Reciter of consolation (*qāriʾ taʿziya*)*

J. Rawzah khūn or al-rawḍa khūn al-qāriʾ: This term, of Persian origin, is composed of two words meaning "reciter of the garden",[137] in which the Arabic word *rawḍa* appears as *rawza*. The term is used primarily in Iran[138] but has also, through the influence of Iranian pilgrims, come to be used by Shīʿite clerics in Iraq, and more generally in the rural areas of Iraq and the Persian Gulf, where it is also pronounced *rayzakhūn* by the more uneducated. It has also come to be used with a derogatory connotation, referring to someone who ascends to the Ḥusaynī pulpit without having the requisite skills for preaching. In Lebanon this title is not in use, except perhaps by some clerics who may have picked it up during their studies in Najaf or Qumm.

Today the term is used mainly to refer to a preacher who devotes the sermon to speaking of the merits and history of the Prophet and his Shīʿite descendants, whereas preachers who emphasize more general intellectual, cultural and social issues are known by the title of "Preacher" (*khaṭīb*).[139]

*K. Sermonizer (*al-wāʿiẓ*)*

*L. Instructor (*al-murshid*)*

*M. Narrator (*al-dhākir*)*

*N. Reporter (*al-muballigh*)*

[134] Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 262.
[135] For details on the city see J. Mandaville, "Ḥimṣ", *EI*² (1986), Vol. 3, pp. 203–204.
[136] For details on the city see J. Sauvaget, "Ḥalab", *EI*² (1971), Vol. 3, pp. 85–90.
[137] See S. Haim, *Persian English Dictionary* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 3rd ed., 2003), p. 317.
[138] See Shams al-Dīn, *Thawrat al-Ḥusayn fī al-wujdān al-shaʿbī*, p. 293.
[139] See Bāqir al-Maqdisī, *Fann al-khaṭāba min al-muqaddima* (Qumm: Maʿhad al-rasūl al-aʿẓam lil-khaṭāba, no date), p. 9.

*O. Eulogist (*al-maddāḥ*)*

All of the afore-mentioned titles are used today to refer to Ḥusaynī preachers with varying frequency in different Shīʿite regions.

The proliferation of titles for Ḥusaynī preachers reflects the great popularity of Ḥusaynī Sermons throughout the Shīʿite world and the resulting increase in the number of its practitioners, who today constitute a full-fledged prestigious social-religious class.[140]

Conclusion

The Ḥusaynī Sermon came into being shortly after Ḥusayn's tragic death and went through four historical stages before coming to have the form and distribution it has today. In its present form it consists of an introduction with a style and tone of its own, an elegy to Ḥusayn, a lecture on an issue of current interest, and a recital of the events of the battle of Karbalāʾ. This structure has become the norm among Ḥūsaynī preachers. In recent times the lecture has tended more and more to deal with educational, social and political issues of current interest. It is thus not surprising that Shīʿite political parties use the sermon for the purpose of advancing their causes.

Although Ḥusaynī Sermons are held regularly on the Shīʿite holidays, they may also be given on any other day of the year. Nor do they have a fixed venue, being held in mosques, in Ḥusaynī shrines, at imāms' tombs, in homes, on the street and in public spaces, and even on means of public transport. Ḥusaynī Sermons may be initiated and organized by a variety of individuals and groups. As a result of the sermon's importance in the lives of Shīʿites, the preacher is referred to by many different titles.

[140] Al-Kirbāssī, *Muʿjam khuṭabāʾ al-minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, p. 151; Al-Kāẓimī, *Al-Minbar al-Ḥusaynī*, pp. 265–266.

Color Semantics of Women's Clothing in ʿĀshūrāʾ-Day Rituals: Karbalāʾ Province As a Case Study

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Abstract

This study deals with the meanings attached to the garments worn by present-day Shīʿī women in the southern Iraqi province of Karbalāʾ during the performance of the rites commemorating the death of Ḥusayn at the Battle of Karbalāʾ in the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ. The data were taken from broadcasts of tashbīh ("imitation") plays on four Shīʿite satellite television channels (al-Salām, Ahl al-Bayt, al-Ghadīr and Karbalāʾ) during the years 2010-2013.
The study will address the following questions:
1. What are the colors used most frequently by Shīʿīte women in Iraq.
2. What meanings are attached to these colors?
3. How is the color symbolism associated with the performance of the rites among women?
The article begins with a theoretical discussion of the meanings of colors as social conventions, in general and among Arabs, and then provides a survey of the symbolic meanings of the colors worn by Shīʿite women in Iraq at the ʿĀshūrāʾ Day ceremonies. The study goes on to describe the commonly used colors among Shīʿite women, and the association of these colors with the rites performed by women, as well as their symbolism. We shall see that the different colors can have positive or negative connotations, depending on the figures with whom they are associated, be they the Prophet's descendants (āl al-bayt), the Prophet himself or the twelve imāms. The garments worn by Shīʿite women at the ʿĀshūrāʾ rites are found to have clear social and religious meanings, and to possess clear and definite functions that accord with the Shīʿī doctrine. The choice of colors was influenced by the incident at Karbalāʾ, and the fact that the same clothes are worn by all women every year for the rites provides a bond between Twelver Shīʿī women everywhere, as well as constituting a sacred element in the Shīʿite collective mind, where they have taken on a symbolic and historic dimension.

Keywords: Clothes, colors, women, Shīʿa, ʿĀshūrāʾ rites, Karbalāʾ, grief.

Significance of the study:

1. Provides a better understanding of an important part of Iraqi society.

2. Provides an account of a topic that has so far received scant scholarly attention.

3. Sheds light on the effects of the colors of clothes and the effect of religious doctrine on the players of the *tashbīh* and its association with the political, social and religious state of affairs.

4. The study's objective: To determine the meanings of the colors of the clothing worn at the rites commemorating Ḥusayn's death in battle at Karbalāʾ.

Research questions:

1. What are the most commonly-used colors for the clothes of Shīʿite women in Iraq?

2. What meanings do these colors possess?

3. What color symbolism is associated with the ʿĀshūrāʾ Day rites performed by Iraqi Shīʿite women?

The time frame:

The *tashābīh* ("imitation") rites as broadcast by four Iraqi satellite channels (al-Salām, Ahl al-bayt, al-Ghadīr and Karbalāʾ) in the years 2010-2013.

The geographical range:

Acts in imitation of the killing of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī performed in Iraq, specifically in the province of Karbalāʾ.

The topic:

An inquiry into the meanings of the colors of the clothes used in the rites commemorating the Battle of Karbalāʾ, in theatrical scenes that have come to be known as *tashābīh* ("imitations").[1]

The research method

In view of the nature of the subject-matter, the following two research methods were used:

1. The inductive method: This involved the collection of comments on the clothes worn by Shīʿite women at the relevant ʿĀshūrāʾ rites. These were then classified and generalizations were derived, in accordance with the criteria of the present study.

2. The descriptive method: The colors of the clothes women wear at the ʿĀshūrāʾ rites are described and compared, in order to determine the practical additions, repeated topics and information, and aspects that have not been studied so far.

[1] *Al-tashbīh* (pl. *al-tashābīh*) is a ritual folk play that originated in the mourning rites for al-Ḥusayn on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, originally in commemoration of the killing of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī at Karbalāʾ. The play acts out the tragic event in a straightforward didactic manner, using a simplified plot and language that is easily understood, for the purpose of inculcating the scenes of al-Ḥusayn's fate in the minds of the spectators. The play is independent of other rites and has evolved over time with changing religious, social and political circumstances, without having been affected at all by classical or modern drama elsewhere.
The play had its origins with an elegy poem (*marthiya*) which described to an audience the sad events at the Battle of Karbalāʾ. The orator, the poet or another person would also add a simple pantomime of the events at Karbalāʾ and express their grief at what had happened. He would wave a sword in the air and the audience may also have played a part, in voice or movement. Since scene would be repeated year after year, among a group of people who came to form a circle within which this "imitation" took place. As a result the play also came to be known as "the circle" (*al-dāʾira*). The annual repetition of the scenes of ʿĀshūrāʾ in the form of folk plays were used for the purpose of emulating the great suffering that al-Ḥusayn, his family and his companions were forced to endure.
Even when the play evolved and came to be very commonly performed, it retained its ancient folk character and its historic features and contents without any noticeable change.
The "imitation" play has the following features: It is performed by amateurs and not by a professional cast; the acting is improvised and does not adhere to any organized theory of drama; it is an emotional dramatic tragedy which presents in a heroic manner events, stories and legends associated with the Battle of Karbalāʾ; the contents are taken from the *maqātil* literature on the death of al-Ḥusayn; the play relies more on movement and interaction with the audience than on language and text; the actors are greatly affected by the subject matter and often moan and shed tears in grief; the audience is also a participant, and reacts to the scenes being presented, directly or indirectly, occasionally mixing with the players and identifying with them so much that they forget that it is only a play and develop a dialectical relationship with the scenes. For more information see Andrzey Wirth, "Semiological Aspects of the Ta'ziyeh", in Chelkowski Peter, J. *Ta'ziyeh, Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New-York: 1979), p. 165; Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaydarī, *Trājīdyā Karbalāʾ*, Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 1999, pp. 397-404.

Color and sanctity in social usage

In Pharaonic times the ancient Egyptians already used colors in their rites and religious services. For prayer clothes colored in deep red, bright yellow and light blue were used. Color was also used in painting the walls of places of worship, where each color had its own symbolism and rank. In ancient Mesopotamia colors were divided into two classes, one used by the royal family for its garments as well as its buildings, while the other was used by the common people; color thus marked a class distinction.[2]

Colors in everyday life have meanings taken from people's experiences, with no profound symbolism. Thus black stands for grief and pain, white for cleanliness and purity, green for peace, and red for love or revolt. Blue, although a color that has a strong presence in everyday life, has not had a specific meaning attached to it, similarly to brown and yellow.[3]

Color in Arab culture

In pre-Islamic literature colors possessed specific meanings in specific cases in the desert environment. The historian al-Masʿūdī (d. 957), author of *Murūj al-dhahab*, is considered to have been the earliest Arab writer who discussed the meanings and nature of color. He studied colors from three aspects:

A. Linguistic: The origin and derivation of color names.

B. The meanings of colors and time.

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[2] Mutawwaj, Samrān Nadīm, *Dalālāt al-lawn wa-rumūzuhu fī al-shiʿr al-jāhilī*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Damascus: Tishrīn University, 2004, pp. 185-190.

[3] Ḥamdān, Aḥmad ʿAbdullāh, *Dalālāt al-alwān fī shiʿr Nizār Qabbānī*, unpublished MA thesis, Nāblus: al-Najāḥ National University, 2008, p. 29.

C. The influence of place on color.[4]

Al-Masʿūdī attempted to associate colors with meanings in his discussion about previous nations, in which armies were divided into five divisions, each with its own form, and each form with its own color: Black, white, yellow, red, green and sky blue. In addition, al-Masʿūdī also attempted to associate colors with mental states. He notes that the nations of antiquity tried to make red the color of war, but that the use of this color by women and children for purposes of embellishment and in times of joy and celebration made this impossible. He furthermore states that the perception of this color induces a sense of delight, while seeing the color black induces a sense of dejection. This difference, he argues, is due to the contrast between the light that makes vision possible and darkness that prevents it, the different levels of light resulting in different colors.[5]

Black in the Arab heritage

Black is "the absence of color".[6] As such, it is not in fact a color at all. Ibn Ḥazm states that "darkness and blackness are one, there is no difference between them. But the negro, the raven and (black) clothes are not (truly) black, but are only called them metaphorically".[7]Black, the darkest of colors, is the opposite of white in every respect, representing "complete darkness and lack of vision. It is used as a symbol of grief, misfortune, and nothingness. It has also been used to connote death, separation, fear and emptiness. Students of color have placed it at the head of the list of colors

[4] For more details see: al-Masʿūdī, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. by Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1989, 1:218-219.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Al-Hadrūsī, Muḥammad, *al-Lawn fī shuʿarāʾ al-muʿallaqāt*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, al-Yarmūk University, 1003, p. 19.
[7] Ibn Ḥazm, ʿAlī b. Aḥmad, *al-Faṣl fī al-milal wal-ahwāʾ wal-nuḥal*, ed. by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayra, Beirut: Dār al-jīl, 1985, 5:275.

among all nations".[8] But among the Arabs it is listed in second place, after white, according al-Namrī.

In the Arabic language numerous expressions demonstrate the general sense of black as opposed to beauty and life, peace and quiet; it is the color of pessimism and evil. It has been classified as follows in lists of associated words: "Black (*aswad*), black (*asḥam*), then *jawn*, coal-black (*fāḥim*), black (*ḥālik*), *ḥānik*, *ḥalkūk*, *shuḥkūk*, *dajūjī*, then *ghirbīb*, *ghudāfī* and *khudārī*".[9]

The meaning attached to blackness has also been used for the denotation of good or of preventing evil, and of avoiding the evil eye, jealousy and the like. Perhaps this involves a contrived opposition, meant to deceive the person who casts the evil eye the think that the situation is bad and so to confound him. Whatever may be the truth of the matter, it is certainly the case that black has served in Arab culture to symbolize evil and pessimism. Thus, for example, the black stones supporting the cooking pot on the fire (*al-athāfī*)[10] and the black raven both symbolize exile or banishment from home, which was a cause of great concern to the nomadic Arabs. Black is also a color that was much in use by Arab poets in connection with hair, eyes, gums and lips.

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[8] ʿUmar, Aḥmad Mukhtār, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, Kuwait: Dār al-buḥūth al-ʿilmiyya, 2nd printing, 1402/1982, pp. 107, 186, 195.

[9] Al-Thaʿālibī, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad, *Fiqh al-lugha wa-sirr al-ʿarabiyya*, ed. by Jamā Ṭalaba, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2001, p. 118.

[10] The stones used to support the cooking pot were black. The Arabs had a proverb: *ramāhu bi-thālithat al-athāfī*, which means "he hurled something huge at him", such a part of a mountain. Each such stone was said to be the size of a human head, and if one threw all three of them, the enemy was finished. This proverb has meanings that go beyond that of the overt expression. What can "hurled blackness at him" mean? Clearly the meaning here is metaphorical; the blackness of the stones used to hold the pot is here transferred and refers to the blackness of the person at whom it is thrown, perhaps his face or his body. In other words, it involves a covert allusion to grief and disappointment as primary aspects, and to shame and dishonor as complex aspects. The meanings that the color black possesses are reflected, for example, also in the clothes that both men and women wear. Hurling blackness was thus a direct reference to and a depiction of the shame and dishonor on the victim's face or body. On the other hand, the person who did the hurling could not be certain of this outcome, but his hand would be colored by the cast stone, and would therefore have traces of black on it, as proof of his act and symbol of his repugnant behavior. Shame is thus attached not only to the person who is hit by the stone, but also to him who casts it, whose criminal act can be seen by all, through the black color on his hand. He thus partakes of some of the aspects of the meaning of black, although the element of grief is to be ascribed only to the victim. For more details see: al-ʿAdwānī, Maʿjib, "Thālithat al-athāfī", *al-Riyāḍ*, 1 Ṣafar 1424, issue no. 12704, 38th year.

From the previous discussion concerning the meanings of the color black it is clear that these are associated with psychological and social relationships that permeate class and other conflicts which have a formative connection with nature, darkness and power, all of which have left traces in the way this color has been perceived.

The color black is mentioned seven times in the Quran, five of which refer to the face and to its transformation to black in this world and the next as a result of one's evil deeds.[11]Among its meanings are the darkness of night and the color of the faces of the wrongdoers, infidels and liars in Hell, grief, pain and worry, dryness and perdition.

In the prophetic *ḥadīth* literature it is stated that Muslims hate this color in their garments and as the color of the skin;[12]in this sense it appears more than one-hundred times in *ḥadīth*.[13]

White in the Arab heritage

White represents light, without which it would be impossible to see any color at all.[14] It is the first of the colors of the cold type, which arouses a sense of quiet and serenity.[15]

White occupies the second place among the colors, after black, according to the classification made by various nations.[16]

The Arabs in antiquity had special expressions for denoting degrees and types of white. Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 1038 CE) listed the levels of white as follows: White (*abyaḍ*), *yaḍfaq*, snow-white (*lahiq*), white (*nāṣiʿ*), *hijān* and pure (*khāliṣ*).[17]

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[11] Q 3:106, 39:60, 16:58, 43:17, 35:27.
[12] Amīn, ʿAyyāḍ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, "Taʾthīr al-lawn fī al-qurʾān al-karīm wal-ḥadīth al-nabawī al-sharīff", *al-Akādīmī* 57, 2011, p. 80.
[13] See: Wensinck, A.J., *Concordance of Hadith*, Leiden: Brill, 1955, 3:16-21.
[14] Mukhtār, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, p. 10.
[15] Shukrī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *al-Iḍāʾa al-Masraḥiyya*, Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya lil-kitāb, 1985, 85.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Al-Thaʿālibī, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad, *Fiqh al-lugha wa-sirr al-ʿarabiyya*, ed. by Jamāl Ṭalba, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2001, p. 113.

Numerous expressions are used in Arabic when referring to white things: A white man is called *azhar*, a women *ruʿbūba*, white hair is called *ashmaṭ*, a white horse is *ashhab*, a white camel is *ahyash*, a bull *lahiq*, a cow *liyāḥ*, a donkey *aqmar*, a ram *amlaḥ*, a garment *abyaḍ* and silver *yaqaq*.[18]All these words denote whiteness in various objects. Black, on the other hand, is considered inauspicious; it is feared and arouses fear.[19]When black and white are mixed, the result is a new color, gray, which is considered disconcerting; it is said to arouse cunning, worry and a lack of clarity in the mind.

The meaning of a color can be positive or negative, depending on the context. However, white has usually signified positive characteristics, such as beauty in women and dominance in men.

The color white is mentioned eleven times in the Qurʾān,[20] which makes it the most frequently-occurring color name in that book. There the color symbolizes purity and piety in this world and the next. The symbolism of purity and cleanliness may explain the fact that white clothes are worn on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and that the shrouds of the dead are white. The Qurʾān uses the expression "white face" in connection with the Day of Resurrection, as an indication of the triumph in the afterlife of those who are pious in this world: "On the day when (some?) faces will be whitened and (some) faces will be blackened";[21] "As for those whose faces have been whitened, lo! In the mercy of Allah".[22]

Red in the Arab heritage

[18] Ibid., p. 113.
[19] Abū ʿAwn, Amal ʿAbd al-Qādir, *al-Lawn wa-abʿāduhu fī al-shiʿr al-jāhilī*, Ph.D. thesis, al-Najāḥ University, 2003, 38.
[20] Q 3:107, 2:187, 7:108, 20:22, 26:33, 16:15, 28:32, 37:46, 12:84, 35:27, 3:106.
[21] Q 3:106.
[22] Q 3:107.

Red is one of the first colors encountered in nature: "It is a warm color, derived from the blaze of the sun, fire and extreme heat; it has one of the longest wavelengths of visible light".[23]It is also the color with the most contradictory meanings, of both happiness and sadness. It is the color of violence, joy and sadness. It has, of course, a very close association with blood: "It is a color that arouses fear in the mind and is sacred in religion, as found, for example, in the texts from Ugarit about the wars of the goddess ʿAnat, who rejoices at the sight of the red color of the blood she spills".[24]The Japanese used the color red to drive away nightmares, while in ancient Egypt soldiers wore red signet rings when encountering the enemy, in the belief that these would protect them from injury, and prevent them from dying if they did come to harm.[25]

In Western religion red symbolizes sacrifice for a principle or for religion. In many faiths it is the color of Hell. Among the Hindus it symbolizes life and joy. It is also associated with the blood of birth and the flow of blood. In some tribes the newly-born infant is smeared with blood, in the belief that this will ensure it a long life.[26]

In many religions red symbolizes the inferno, which is also depicted as being red in color.[27] But color symbolism differs from one nation to another; for some it was associated with celebration and rejoicing.[28]

In the Qurʾān the color red occurs only once, where it denotes nice scenery.[29] It is the color of some parts of mountains and of some fruits of trees.[30] In the *ḥadīth* it occurs

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[23] ʿUmar, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, p. 111.
[24] Ifrīḥa, Anīs. *Ūghārīt: Malāḥim wa-asāṭīr fī raʾs al-shuʿarāʾ*. Beirut: Dār al-manār, 1980, pp. 191-192.
[25]Ḥamdān, Aḥmad ʿAbdullāh. *Dalālāt al-alwān fī shiʿr Nizār Qabbānī*, unpublished MA thesis, Nāblus: al-Najāḥ University, 2008, p. 41.
[26] Al-Qarʿān, Fāyiz ʿĀrif Sulaymān, *al-Wasm wal-Washy fī al-shiʿr al-jāhilī*. University dissertation, Irbid: Yarmūk University, 1984, pp. 124-128.
[27] Amīn, ʿAyyāḍ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, "Taʾthīr al-lawn fī al-Qurʾān al-karīm wal-ḥadīth al-nabawī al-sharīf", *al-Akādīmī*, issue 57, 2011, p. 77.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Q 35:27.

in more than fifty places,[31] some in the literal sense and some with the meaning of white or yellow. Occasionally it has more than one meaning and a symbolism that transcends the plain color. The color red appears to have been considered disgusting when associated with ornamentation, which can give rise to temptation and distraction from matters of religion. Red was liked due to the Prophet's use of it to refer to the color of the camel, an image used by some poets. The wind, too, was described using this color, as symbolizing its destructive force.[32]

Green in the Arab heritage

Green is a color with a relatively stable and clear meaning. It is a favorite device in vague allusions, "because it is originally associated with important objects in nature, such as plants and gems. This was later reinforced in religious belief due to its connection with fertility and youth, both among the main sources of human happiness".[33]The color is associated with trees, which in turn symbolize life and renewal, in addition to its connection with fields, gardens, and mental calm.[34]In popular Arabic sayings livelihood is described as green, for example in the invocation "God, make it a green year",[35] and the like.

Among the Arabs in antiquity mentions of the color green were limited to contexts of fertility, life, plants and trees, garments, and a number of simple creatures which they encountered in their surroundings. It was a color which they liked, since it symbolized fertility and goodness, and was often invoked by the poets of the times. White or

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[30] Ibn ʿAlī, Abū Islām Aḥmad. *Dalālāt al-alwān fī al-Qurʾān*, URL: www.saaid.net/book/10/3432.doc, accessed August 30, 2013.
[31] See Wensinck, A.J., *A Concordance of the Muslim Tradition*, Leiden: Brill, 1936, 1:510-514.
[32] See al-Atharī, Muḥammad Bahja, *al-Alwān fī al-fuṣḥā wal-dīrāsāt al-ʿilmiyya al-lughawiyya*. Lectures of the Open Seminars. Baghdad: Publications of the Iraqi Academy of Science, 1414/1993, p. 22.
[33] Al-Thaʿālibī, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad, *Fiqh al-lugha wa-sirr al-ʿarabiyya*, ed. by Jamāl Ṭalba, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2001, 120.
[34] ʿUmar, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, 210.
[35] Ibid., 211.

green garments were socially significant as the clothing worn by a clan's people of distinction.[36] It was also the color worn by the immortals in ancient lore; for example, it is worn by al-khiḍr and the residents of Paradise.[37]The color green is used metaphorically to denote goodness, as in "green face", meaning a kind one, and expressions such as "may your path be green".

In Islamic doctrine[38] green signifies loyalty, eternity and spiritual contemplation. Because of its association with fields, gardens and trees it has come to be connected with felicity, as well as with Paradise in the afterlife.[39]The seats in Paradise are said to be green,[40]and green garments has become a way in which the faithful can feel closer to and identify with those already in heaven.[41]In the *ḥadīth* the color green appears thirty-seven times,[42] usually in reference to the more pleasant aspects of life: Greenery, water and a beautiful face. Green could also symbolize apparent beauty, that arouses desire but is deceptive, as in the following passage from the *ḥadīth*, in which the Prophet warned his followers: "Beware of the green manure". When asked what he meant he replied: "It is a beautiful girl who is a source of evil",[43] meaning that one should beware of a beautiful woman whose origins are evil, like a green tree that grows on manure.

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[36] Ḥamdān, Aḥmad ʿAbdullāh, *Dalālāt al-alwān fī shiʿr Nizār Qabbānī*, unpublished MA thesis, Nāblus: Najāh National University, 2008, p. 47.

[37] Q 76:21.

[38] In the Qurʾān green is inferior only to white. The color is mentioned in the following verses: 12:43, 46, 6:99, 36:80, 55:76, 76:21, 18:31.

[39] ʿUmar, Aḥmad Mukhtār, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, Kuwait: Dār al-buḥūth al-ʿilmiyya, 2nd printing, 1402/1982, p. 165; Amīn, ʿAyyāḍ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, "Taʾthīr al-lawn fī al-Qurʾān al-karīm wal-ḥadīth al-nabawī al-sharīf", *al-Adādīmī* 57, 2011, p. 77.

[40] See Q 55:76, 22:63.

[41] It may not be superfluous at this point to note that because of the above-mentioned cultural and religious meanings, the color green is present in the flags of many Muslim countries and organizations, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia and Hamas. In Libya green was the country's official color before the recent revolution and its flag was just green; the late leader Muʿammar al-Qadhdhāfī even wrote a *Green Book*, green being the source of life, so he believed.

[42] See: Wensinck, A.J., *Concordance of Hadith*, Leiden: Brill, 1943, 2:39-40.

[43] See: Ibn al-Milaqqin, ʿUmar b. ʿAlī, *Khulāṣat al-badr al-munīr fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-fatḥ al-kabīr*, ed. by Ḥamdī b. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Salafī, Riyadh: Dār al-rushd, 1414/1993, 2:179.

In Islamic art green is a constant presence, and is especially revered in association with the Prophet.[44] It is the color of most Muslim domes[45] and shrines,[46] and possesses both a spiritual and an esthetic dimension.[47]

Yellow in the Arab heritage

Yellow is a warm color and represents incandescence and radiance. It is the color most closely associated with illumination and luminosity, since it is the color of the sun and other light sources, also connected with heat, activity, joy and happiness.[48]The color was venerated among idol worshippers; yellow symbolized the Egyptian sun-god Ra.[49]The meanings of the color depend on the context. Thus it can represent drought, wilting and illness. Dark yellow connotes brackish water while bright yellow arouses joy in the beholder. In the Qurʾān the color appears several times with different meanings, depending on the context.[50]Among ancient nations that worshipped the sun it was a color that tended to be considered holy.

Arabs viewed yellow teeth with loathing, as a sign of disease, ugliness and accumulated food leftovers in the mouth. It can also be the color of death, especially following an illness. But it may also indicate healing, since the sun is considered the preserver of humankind and life in general. In some cultures it was used for protection against disease.[51]Yellow has also been associated with preparations for action.

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[44] ʿAbd al-Amīr, Ṣafā Luṭfī, "al-Dalāla al-rūḥiyya lil-lawn al-akhḍar fī al-ʿimāra al-islāmiyya", *Majallat jāmiʿat Bābil* 18(1), 2010, p. 314.
[45] Domes in Islam have a philosophical dimension. Known as "symbolic structures, they represent the heavens and denote eternity, connection with the Creator and the infinite cosmos.
[46] With the exception of the shrines of the Shīʿī imāms, which are golden.
[47] Op.cit., 321.
[48] Shukrī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *al-Iḍāʾa al-masraḥiyya*, Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya lil-kitāb, 1985, p. 163.
[49] ʿUmar, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, p. 163.
[50] See, for example, 2:69.
[51] Riyāḍ, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, *al-Takwīn fī al-funūn al-tashkīliyya*, 2nd printing, Cairo: Dār al-nahḍa al-ʿarabiyya, 1983, p. 261.

Greenish yellow is considered a most unpleasant color, and is often associated with illness, emaciation, cowardice, deception, betrayal and jealousy.[52]

Blue in Arab heritage, and the color's association with sickness

Blue has a number of different meanings, perhaps because it comes in so many different hues, from very light to very dark. Dark blue approaches black, and therefore arouses aversion and hatred and has become associated with demons and other negative forces on the earth, while light blue is associated with water and sky, and so is perceived as fitting for calm and coolness.[53]

The color blue has particular significance in the Hebrew language and its speakers. It is the color of Yahweh, and therefore has become sanctified among the Jews.[54] For the Chinese, on the other hand, it is the color of death.[55]The various shades of this color have their own special meanings. Thus dark blue denotes indolence and calm, and in antiquity was also associated with obedience, loyalty, hope and thought, while light blue reflects trust, innocence and youth, and also evokes a calm sea and a mild disposition. Deep blue denotes a sense of responsibility and faith in one's mission.[56]The fact that blue is the color of the sky and of water has numerous psychological and doctrinal effects, making it capable of creating an atmosphere of coolness. The Arabs used it in tattoos,[57] while the Qurʾān states: "The Day the Horn will be blown. And We will gather the criminals, that Day, blue-eyed".[58]In the original text the last word is just "blue", but it has traditionally been interpreted as "blue-eyed", because that was the most odious eye color among the ancient Arabs,

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[52] ʿUma, *al-Lugha wal-lawn*, p. 164.
[53] Riyāḍ, op.cit., p. 261.
[54] ʿUmar, op.cit., p. 164.
[55] Ibid., p. 166.
[56] Ibid., p. 183.
[57] Yaḥyā, Ḥamūda, *Naẓariyyat al-alwān*, Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif bi-miṣr, 1979, pp. 138-146.
[58] Q 20:102.

since it reminded them of their blue-eyed Byzantine enemies. That is why they described the enemy in the following terms: Black of liver, reddish of moustache, blue of eye, meaning that the enemy is misshapen, with black face and blue eyes. Among the Arabs blue arouses pessimism. A "blue body" indicates disfigurement, the color of ashes, which is also called "blue" (*azraq*) in Arabic. Skin is said to become blue because of many travails and dryness.[59]

In both the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* blue is associated with what is reprehensible from a religious perspective. In the Qurʾān it appears once, in the aforementioned verse,[60] in which the infidel are promised that the terrors of the Day of Resurrection will give them "blue" bodies and faces. In the *ḥadīth* the color is mentioned three times.[61]

How the battle of Karbalāʾ is reflected in Shīʿite literature and public rites

The killing of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī at Karbalāʾ on the 10th day of the month of Muḥarram in the year 61/10.10.680 has been a rich source of materials for writers and other artists as well as the general public, and inspired numerous literary and artistic works that focus on the events at Karbalāʾ and its popular legacy. To this day poets and writers compose works on this theme, which has also given rise to plays and dramatic performances. In the plastic arts al-Ḥusayn's severed head, flowing blood, the hand, the horses, the banners, the swords and the daggers have all become well-defined symbols in works that deal with the events at Karbalāʾ.[62]

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[59] Al-Andalusī, Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, ed. by ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwid, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1413/1993, 8:118.

[60] Q 20:102.

[61] See: Wensinck, A.J., op.cit., 2:334.

[62] Note that since the 1960s people like Kāẓim Ḥaydar, Shākir Ḥasan Āl Saʿīd, Khālid al-Jādir, Ṣāliḥ al-Jumayʿī, Rāfiʿ al-Nāṣirī, and Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿAzzāwī, played a role in promoting the memory of what happened at Karbalāʾ. For details, see Salwā, al-Ṭāʾī, "al-Dalālāt al-lawniyya lil-azyāʾ fī al-ṭuqūs al-ḥusayniyya li-wāqiʿat al-ṭaff", *Majallat jāmiʿat Bābil* 19(3), 2011, p. 489.

Here it should be noted that many Shīʿites train and prepare themselves for various roles having to do with the commemoration of the events, among them scribes, painters, actors, producers and people who seek detailed information about what occurred in Karbalāʾ from the speakers at "Ḥusaynī gatherings" in order to be able to give an accurate depiction of the objects and personalities involved, including using the right color symbolism for the people whom they will imitate in front of a large audience during the Ḥusayni mourning ceremonies, at which they declare their loyalty to and memory of the Prophet's family (*āl al-bayt*) and their religious instructions.[63]

Symbolic meaning of the colors of Shīʿī women's garments in Iraq during the ʿĀshūrāʾ Day ceremonies

Colors and their meanings are a dominant theme in the clothes used when acting out the events of ʿĀshūrāʾ, by means of the numerous functions associated with them. Color is perceived as a mental construct that can illuminate the essence of the connection between it and form and its meaning, or between it and the nature of the human psyche, in addition to its esthetic and cultural meanings, which affect the operation of organization based on manifestations of mental, social, political and economic impressions, which create a pictorial and dramatic fabric and reality, in accordance with the states of connection and detachment between collective and individual nature on one hand, and between the personal and objective meaning on the other.

Colors and their meanings have specific features unique to Shīʿites, with which they embody and animate the rites associated with the death of al-Ḥusayn. Thus white, for

[63] Ibid., 490-491.

example, stands for morals, green for hopes, death is red while fate is black, and a white banner symbolizes purity, cleanliness and peace.

Black

Shīʿite women in Iraq wear black throughout most of the year, especially older women, as a sign of mourning and grief for the fate that befell al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī at Karbalāʾ and the great sufferings of the Shīʿī descendants of the Prophet suffered over generations.

The color plays an important role in the Ḥusaynī rites during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram every year. "Ḥusayn's servants"[64] wear black on this occasion. They remove all cheerful elements at the Ḥusaynī memorial and replace it with black cloth; the walls are covered in black, as are the table, the podium, the clock, and everything else.

Green

Green has a special meaning for Shīʿī women in Iraq; it expresses that fact that its wearer belongs to the class of *sāda* or members of the Prophet's family. Green is used during birthday celebrations for the twelve imāms, the Prophet's birthday and the birthday of Fāṭima ("the fourteen infallibles"). The places where the celebrations take place are covered in gilded green cloth and all the objects in it (tables, chairs, walls) are embellished in green. Green is also used during the days of ʿĀshūrāʾ, when the

[64] These are a group of women who volunteer to work on behalf of the commemoration ceremonies for al-Ḥusayn, as an act of piety. For details see al-Firdān, Amīna Jaʿfar, *Ramziyyat al-alwān ʿinda al-marʾa al-shīʿiyya fī al-Baḥrain*, Damascus: Naynawā lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr wal-tawzīʿ, no date, p. 20.

"green banner" (a golden hand, symbolizing the hand of al-ʿAbbās[65] b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib) is embellished with green cloth and gold embroidery.

It is also worth noting the prominent presence of the color green at all religious gatherings. There are several reasons for this:

1. Green is the distinctive color of the denizens of Paradise, symbolizing the glory, pleasure and mental peace of mind that are characteristic of that place. The garments in Paradise are thus green, as are the pillowcases. The Qurʾān mentions this in eight verses.[66]

2. Green, according to many *ḥadīth*s was the favorite color of the Prophet and the imams. In the "night of the homecoming" (*laylat al-mabīt*) the Prophet gave ʿAlī his green garment for his use on that night. The imams, too, are frequently said to have worn green.

3. Shīʿites see the Prophet and the imāms in their dreams, wearing green clothes and a green turban.

4. The "banner of praise" (*liwāʾ al-ḥamd*)[67] is green. According to tradition, on the Day of Judgment the Prophet will give it to ʿAlī, who will carry it, wearing green garments.

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[65] The "hand" of al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib has the following connection to the events at Karbalāʾ: When ʿAbbās returned from carrying water for the women and children in the camp of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī during the battle of Karbalāʾ (680 CE) his hand was cut off, but he refused to return without the water and insisted on carrying the water skin. But he was killed before he was able to bring the water. He is also called "the cupbearer of the thirsty at Karbalāʾ". The region where this happened is called "ʿAbbās' hand". It contains several monuments, among them the place where the hand was cut off. Shīʿites use "ʿAbbās' hand" to ward off evil and jealousy; it is therefore imprinted on their property, their houses and their cars. Some even call their wives by that name. One finds pictures of a hand in which the names of the Prophet's family are written, or the moon of the Banū Hāshim, or "o ʿAbbās". The hand is considered a symbol for the "five people of the covering" (*ahl al-kisāʾ al-khamsa*) (the Prophet Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn). The picture or sculpture of the hand can be found in *ḥusayniyya*s, the shrines of the imāms and at various ceremonies, including those of ʿĀshūrāʾ. For more details see: Muḥaddithī, Jawād, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾ*, translated from Persian into Arabic by Khalīl Zāmil al-ʿIṣāmī, Beirut: Dār al-rasūl al-akram and Dār al-maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ, 1997, 487-488.

[66] The color green is mentioned in the following verses: Q 6:99, 12:43, 46, 18:31, 22:63, 36:80, 55:76, 76:21.

5. Green symbolizes the Prophet's lineage and Islam. It is the most favored color in nature.

For all these reasons, green is a color that Shīʿites venerate and to which they ascribe sanctity.

The use of green garments during the ʿĀshūrāʾ celebrations

When the account of al-Ḥusayn's killing is reenacted at Karbalāʾ the actors who play the roles of al-Ḥusayn's orphaned children and wives wear green. This can be seen especially on the 10th day of the month of Muḥarram, when the women and children wear green garments, covered with a white cloth stained with blood, and a bloody diaper as well, symbolizing the infant ʿAbdullāh.[68] The man who plays the part of al-Ḥusayn at the ceremony also wears a green turban.

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[67] This is a green banner which the Prophet will give ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib on the Day of Resurrection. ʿAlī will be mounted on a she-camel from Paradise and will announce the Resurrection with the formula "There is no God but Allāh, Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh". His followers, the Shīʿites, will come after him and an announcer will say to them: "Rest assured, enter Paradise with him whom you follow". The "banner of praise" is said to have the length of one-thousand years of walking. Its points were of rubies, and it was embroidered with white silver brocade. Its ferrule was of green pearls. It had three tufts, one in the east, one in the west, and one in the middle of the world. Three lines were inscribed on it. The first line read "In the name of Allāh the kind the merciful", the second "Praise be to Allāh, Lord of the worlds", and the third "There is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh". Each line was the length of one-thousand years of walking, and so was its width. ʿAlī will walk with the banner, with his son al-Ḥasan to his right and al-Ḥusayn to his left, until he will stand between the Prophet Muḥammad and the Prophet Ibrāhīm in the shadow of God's throne, and will be covered with a green garment of Paradise. For details see: al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Beirut: Muʾassasat al-wafāʾ, 1404/1983, 7:230-231, *ḥadīth* no. 1, 8:1-2, *ḥadīth* no. 1; al-Ṭabrasī, Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil wa-mustanbaṭ al-masāʾil*, ed. by Muʾassast āl al-bayt li-iḥyāʾ al-turāth, Qumm: Muʾassasat āl al-bayt li-iḥyāʾ al-turāth, 1408/1987, 7:459, *ḥadīth* 1-8656.

[68] ʿAbdullāh al-Aṣghar b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, known as "the infant ʿAbdullāh", and also as "the little ʿAlī". His mother was Rabāb, daughter of Imruʾ al-Qays. He was born in al-Madīna in the year 60/680 and died that same year, in the Battle of ʿĀshūrāʾ, together with his father, his brothers and his uncle. He was killed by an arrow shot by Ḥarmala b. Kāhil al-Asadī al-Kūfī and was buried in Karbalāʾ, on the breast of his father al-Ḥusayn. During the ʿĀshūrāʾ ceremonies some small children are dressed in infants' clothing and carry a cradle, in his memory. In recent years an "International Committee for the Commemoration of the Crime against the Infant Child" has carried out an annual program on this theme, which takes place in every country with a Shīʿite population. The ceremony begins everywhere at the same time. At the beginning the mothers enter, with their infants. Each infant is then presented with a traditional green garment with a green sash and a read headband on which it is written "For what sin was I slain". This is followed by sermons about al-Ḥusayn's tragic death. For more details see: Muḥaddithī, Jawād, *Mawsūʿat ʿĀshūrāʾi*, translated from Persian into Arabic by Khalīl, Zāmil al-ʿIṣāmī, Beirut: Dār al-rasūl al-akram and Dār al-maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ, 1997.

Green is a favorite color among Shīʿite women in Iraq, not only during the ʿĀshūrāʾ season but also at the celebrations for the imāms' birthdays. Shīʿite women also bring green strings from the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab[69] in Damascus and tie them on their wrists, in the belief that it will bring them luck. In fact, a green string on the wrist has become a telltale sign that identifies its bearer as a Shīʿite.

Women, especially older women, wear a green shirt, or one that has green in it, as a sign of joy at the performance of the pilgrimage to the Prophet. This is most commonly seen in women from the families of the *sāda*,[70] who claim to be descended from the Prophet.

Red

The color red has a number of symbolic meanings for Shīʿite women in Iraq. On the one hand it stands for barbarity and oppression, especially in connection with the days of ʿĀshūrāʾ. But at the same time it also symbolizes rebellion against wrong, the victory of blood over the sword.

The color red stands for the blood spilled at Karbalāʾ, the blood of al-Ḥusayn and his family. This can be seen in the dramatic reenactments of the events, in which blood is seen to flow freely.

On the tenth day of Muḥarram the women dress their small children in green (the clothes of the infant ʿAbdullāh), with a piece of white cloth sullied with blood. In addition, the women buy their sons red headbands on which "o Ḥusayn" is written. The red color stands for the blood, which in the annual ceremonies is taken to symbolize rebellion against oppression. Even today, more than 1400 years after the

[69] Zaynab the Great, the daughter of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 CE), the daughter of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī. Her tomb, called al-Zaynabiyya, is located in Damascus (although there are also other opinions concerning the whereabouts of her grave). A Shīʿite *ḥawza* was recently established there, also called al-Zaynabiyya. For details see: Muḥaddithī, op.cit., p. 226.

[70] The term (*sayyid, sayyida*) refers to descendants of the Prophet from the father's side.

event, red retains its symbolism of blood and killing, as well as rebellion against oppression.

Among Shīʿite women in Iraq the color red also symbolizes barbarism (as represented by the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, r. 680-683 CE). Thus in the reenactments of the Battle of Karbalāʾ the clothing of the Umayyad forces, including the caliph, ʿUmar b. Saʿd (d. 686 CE),[71] Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan al-Ḍabābī (d. 686 CE)[72] and their soldiers are all red. The color thus alludes to the Umayyad enemy.

Occasionally they are dressed up in bright and glamorous colors, symbolizing vanity, chaos and arrogance. The actor who plays the role of Shamir wears a helmet decorated with feathers, usually red. The feathers symbolize leadership and command, while the red color alludes to killing and danger.[73]

The color red is also plentiful in the signs and placards at the commemorative ceremonies for al-Ḥusayn, symbolizing killing and blood. However, the red flags and red headbands symbolize something else, namely sacrifice and rebellion against oppression.[74]

Green and white garments

These are the colors of ʿAlī's followers.

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[71] His full name was ʿUmar b. Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ al-Zuhrī al-Madanī, a general whom ʿUbayd Allāh Ibn Ziyad had sent with four-thousand troops to fight against al-Daylam. When Ibn Ziyād learned of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's move from Mecca to al-Kūfa he wrote to ʿUmar and commanded him to return with his troops in order to attack al-Ḥusayn. ʿUmar objected but Ibn Ziyād threatened him and he obeyed and moved to Karbalāʾ, where he fought and killed al-Ḥusayn. ʿUmar was killed by followers of al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafī in al-Kūfa in the year 66/686. For details see: al-Ziriklī, Khayr al-Dīn, *al-Aʿlām*, 7th printing, Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm lil-malāyīn, 1986, 5:47.

[72] His full name was Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan b. Qurṭ al-Kilābī. He was among al-Ḥusayn's killers. He participated in the Battle of Ṣiffīn (657 CE) with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and lived in al-Kūfa. ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād sent him with some others to bring al-Ḥusayn's head to the caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya in Syria. He was killed by Abū ʿAmra ʿAbd al-Rahḥmān b. Abī al-Kanūd, a follower of al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafī. For more details see: al-Ziriklī, op.cit., 3:175-176.

[73] Salwā, al-Ṭāʾī, "al-Dalālāt al-lawniyya lil-azyāʾ fī al-ṭuqūs al-ḥusayniyya li-wāqiʿat al-Ṭaff", *Majallat jāmiʿat Bābil* 19(3), 2011, p. 494.

[74] Al-Firdān, *Ramziyyat al-alwān ʿinda al-marʾa al-shīʿiyya fī al-Baḥrayn*, p. 59.

White and brown garments

These are the colors of al-Ḥusayn's followers[75] who were killed with him at Karbalāʾ.

Colors of the banners[76] at the ʿĀshūrāʾ ceremonies, and their meaning

The banners at the ceremonies are meant to represent used by both sides in the Battle of Karbalāʾ. The most common colors are white, green, red and black.

White banners

White banners[77] symbolize spiritual purity and martyrdom. In Iraq today it represents the city of al-Hindiyya, in whose procession such banners appear, bearing the images of the twelve imāms and embellished with lacework.

Green banners

Green symbolizes ʿAlī and his followers. In the history books it is related that on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ Abū al-Faḍl al-ʿAbbās bore the banner, a large green flag. Banners were borne only by the most honorable and courageous men in the camp.

Red banners

Red banners, symbolizing blood and death, are raised on the 10th day of Muḥarram.

Black banners and flags

These symbolize grief and mourning.

The horse

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[75] The phrase "al-Ḥusayn's followers" refers to a group of men who joined him on his journey from Mecca to Karbalāʾ. Of the 82 men (their exact number is in dispute) came from Mecca, Medina and al-Kūfa) 17 belonged to the Banū Hāshim clan. In Shīʿite sources the group has a number of names: *aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn*, *ḥawāriyy al-Ḥusayn*, *anṣār al-Ḥusayn*. For more detail see: Jawād, op.cit., pp. 43-48; Dukhayl, ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿAlī, *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn ʿalayhi al-salām*, 2nd printing, Beirut: Dār al-tayyār al-jadīd, 1985.

[76] For more information on banners and flags in Muslim military history see: Ibn Qarba, Ṣāliḥ, "al-Rāyāt wal-aʿlām fī al-tārīkh al-ʿaskarī al-islāmī", *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq*, www.wadod.org; date of access: 10.8.2013.

[77] Black and white were among the favorite colors of the Prophet's banners. For more detail see: Ḥarakāt, Ibrāhīm, *al-Siyāsa wal-mujtamaʿ fī ʿaṣr al-rāshidīn*. Beirut: al-Ahliyya lil-nashr wal-tawzīʿ, 1985, p. 266.

In the reenactments of the events of ʿĀshūrāʾ a white horse appears, representing Maymūn,[78] al-Ḥusayn's white steed. Its saddle is colored red, symbolizing the blood that flowed from al-Ḥusayn during the Battle of Karbalāʾ.

Swords

These are made of iron and painted either white or silver. The swords of Shamir and the other players who take the part of the killers are stained in red.

Armor

The armor is made of copper or aluminum, in order to make it lighter and easier to wear during the performance.

The hand of al-ʿAbbās

This is made of white cloth, painted red to symbolize the blood that flowed when al-ʿAbbās' hand was cut off. It is put on a pole and carried by a number of people.[79]

The empty cradle and the tents

Among the props used in the reenactment of the events of ʿĀshūrāʾ are an empty cradle and tents.

[78] A number of traditions give the horse's name as Maymūn; others claim its name was al-Murtajiz. Al-Ḥusayn inherited the Prophet's horses from his father, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. The horse in question, according to Shīʿī sources, defended al-Ḥusayn at the Battle of Karbalāʾ, attacked his enemies and killed several of them. After al-Ḥusayn's death his horse dipped his tuft in al-Ḥusayn's blood, trotted to the tents in which al-Ḥusayn's wives and sisters were staying, neighed and struck the ground with his hooves, as a way of informing them of al-Ḥusayn's death. The women understood his message and began to wail. The horse then went off, threw itself into the Euphrates River and disappeared (like the Prophet's donkey, which threw itself into a well after the Prophet passed away). For more details see: Sindawi,K.,(2004).The Image of Husayn Ibn 'Ali in Maqatil Literature. Quaderni di Studi Arabi **.**20-21,79-104.

[79] See note. 65.

Conclusion

The present study described the meanings of the colors of the garments worn by contemporary Iraqi Shīʿite women in the province of Karbalāʾ in southern Iraq in the course of the reenactment of the events concerning al-Ḥusayn in the Battle of Karbalāʾ on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, as shown in programs broadcast by four Iraqi satellite channels during the years 2010-2013. The channels are: Al-Salām, Ahl al-Bayt, al-Ghadīr and Karbalāʾ.

The study answered the following questions:

- What are the most common colors used by Shīʿī women in Iraq?
- What are the meanings that are attached to these colors?
- What is the connection between the colors' symbolism and the dominant rites among women?

The study began with presenting the theoretical background, including the meanings attached to the various colors (black, white, red, green, yellow and blue) in traditional practices in society and the Arab legacy, and then went on to describe the symbolic meanings of the colors of the clothes worn by Shīʿī women in Iraq during the commemoration ceremonies of the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ. It became evident that, in the province of Karbalāʾ, the main colors in this connection were black, green, white, red and gold (yellow).

The study also found that the above-mentioned colors as used by Shīʿī women can have both positive and negative meanings, associated with the Prophet and his family, and the twelve imāms. Thus, for example, the color black expresses grief at the death of al-Ḥusayn and his family, as well as modesty and decency; green represents the Prophet's family; red symbolizes the blood of al-Ḥusayn and his followers who were slain at Karbalāʾ; gold represents the golden domes on the tombs of the Shīʿite imāms.

The study shows how Shīʿī women translate the principles and beliefs associated with ʿĀshūrāʾ into the colors of their clothing, and how the choice of colors reflects the events of that day. The garments worn at the reenactment of these events unify all Shīʿī women and contribute to inculcating the sacred elements of ʿĀshūrāʾ into the Shīʿite collective mentality.

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Religious Instruction among the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil (Southern Lebanon 1370–1780)

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There can be no doubt that the political, economic and social situation had a considerable effect on the educational system among the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil during the period in question. Certainly the political situation played an important role in the facilitation of educational, cultural and social activities, while economic considerations had an effect on education both with respect to the possibilities for self-study by students and in the establishment and financing of educational institutions, since paying for the costs of education is considered by Shʿītes as one of the tasks of their society. Social factors, too, play a certain role; as we shall see, family affiliation of students and teachers as well as the division into social classes affected education.

In the following pages we shall clarify in some detail the effect of political, economic and social factors on instruction and education in the Jabal ʿĀmil region. First, however, let us present some background information concerning the region itself.

A historical and geographical survey of Jabal ʿĀmil

Jabal ʿĀmil is the rather small region known today as Southern Lebanon. Its southern boundary is formed by Nahal Keziv, which flows from north of the town of Tarshīḥa westward, and empties into the Mediterranean Sea south of the village of al-Zīb.[1] Its northern boundary is the Awwalī River, which empties into the Mediterranean north of Sidon. Its western boundary is the Mediterranean, and in the east its boundary follows Nahal Snir in the Ḥūla Valley, to the village of al-Baṣṣa. One scholar defines the region as follows: "When we speak of Jabal ʿĀmil from a geographical point of view we refer to that region of the Levant whose historical boundary lies between the Awwalī River, Jizzīn and Mashghara to the north, Marjʿayūn, Bānyās and the Ḥūla to the east, al-Zīb, Wādī Qarn, Saʿsaʿ in Palestine and Wādī Fāra to the south, and which today constitutes the province of Southern Lebanon".[2] Some historians claim a connection between Jabal ʿĀmil or ʿĀmila and the tribe of one of the ten children of Sheba, who emigrated to the Levant after the flood of al-ʿArim and settled in the vicinity of Damascus, in an area known as Jabal ʿĀmil to this day.

It is at any rate almost universally agreed that the inhabitants of Jabal ʿĀmil origi-

[1] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 48.
[2] Nūr al-Dīn, *Muṭāraḥāt shiʿriyya fī Jabal ʿĀmil*, 17.

nally came from Yemen.[3] Lammens[4] states that the Mitwālīs, who live in Syria. joined Twelver Shīʿism but that they are original inhabitants of Syria, who did not intermingle with other, foreign elements.

During the Ottoman period the Jabal ʿĀmil region was known as "the land of Bishāra", after a person of that name,[5] and later as "the land of the Mitwālīs",[6] which was the word used to refer to the Shīʿites there. Most scholars agree that the name Jabal ʿĀmil is derived from the Yemeni tribe of ʿĀmila b. Sabā.[7] Jabal ʿĀmil used to be divided into eight counties (*nāḥiya, muqāṭaʿa*), each consisting of a number of villages ruled by a single governor. The four southern counties were Jabal Hūnīn, county seat Bint Jubayl; Jabal Tibnīn, county seat Tibnīn; Qānā Shore, county seat Qānā; and Maʿraka Shore, county seat Tyre. The four northern counties were Shaqīf, county seat al-Nabaṭiyya; al-Shawmar, county seat the base of Anṣār; al-Tuffāḥ, county seat Jabʿ; and Jizzīn, county seat Jizzīn.[8] The total area of the region is three-thousand km^2. The great majority of the populace belongs to Twelver Shīʿism, with small Sunnī and Christian minorities.

In Ottoman times the Metwālis in Jabal ʿĀmil were divided into three large groups: the Banū Ṣaʿb in the county of Shaqīf; the Banū Munkar in the counties of Shawmar and al-Tuffāḥ; and the Banū ʿAlī al-Ṣaghīr in the "land of Bishāra". They enjoyed a great deal of autonomy under their own sheikhs. The only sign of their subservience to the Sublime Porte consisted in some annual taxes.[9]

As happened in the other provinces of Syria, Jabal ʿĀmil came under the Ottoman tax-farming system; it was ruled by a long series of local feudal families, some of whom owed their loyalty directly to the Emir of Mt. Lebanon Province, whether of the Maʿin or the Shihāb clan; others were subordinate to the governor of Damascus

[3] Āl Ṣafā, *Taʾrīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 33–49.

[4] Lammens, *La Syrie, précis historique*, 2:182, 2:184.

[5] Āl Ṣafā, *Taʾrīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 24.

[6] According to Aḥmad Riḍā this word (in Arabic *matāwila*, singular *mutawālī*) has been used to refer to the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil, the Biqāʿ Valley and Kisrawān since the end of the seventeenth century CE (see Aḥmad Riḍā, "al-Matāwila aw al-shīʿa fī Jabal ʿĀmil", 425ff.). The origin of the name goes back to epithets by which the various feuding ethnic and regional groups in the area were known. Each such group depended for its survival during calamities on the strength of its members. The Shʿites were given this name because of their zeal (for details see: al-Zayn, *lil-Baḥth ʿan tārīkhinā*, 481). The word itself is connected to the loyalty (*walāʾ*) of Shīʿites to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants. According to Muḥsin al-Amīn the specific form *mutawālī* originated in a Shīʿite battle cry: *mut waliyyan li-ʿAlī* (literally: Die in loyalty to ʿAlī). This explanation is mentioned by Muḥammad ʿAbdu, who offers another one as well: Shīʿites attended (*tawallū*) to ʿAlī and his sons (see: al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 67). Elsewhere he explains as follows: "The word *al-mutawālī* is a present participle of the verb *tawālā*, derived from the word *wilāʾ*, 'loyalty', in reference to their love for their masters, the Prophet's family" (idem, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 1:20). The latter is the explanation given by Aḥmad Riḍā, according to Muḥsin al-Amīn, in *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* (see: ʿAlī. *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, 251–156). Recently Amir-Moezzi has shown that in the early days of Islam the name *mutawallī al-aʾimma* was given to faithful Shīʿites (for details see: Amir-Moezzi, Le guide divin, 74, n. 151; Mervin, *Ḥarakat al-iṣlāḥ al-shīʿī*, 31–32; Aḥmad Riḍā, "al-Matāwila aw al-shīʿa fī Jabal ʿĀmil", 425ff.; Ende, "Mutawālī", 780–781; ʿAlī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, 6:252–253; al-Faqīh, *Jabal ʿĀmil fī al-tārīkh*, 31).

[7] Saʿd, *Jabal ʿĀmil bayna al-atrāk wal-faransiyyīn*, 15.

[8] For more details on the divisions within Jabal ʿĀmil, see: al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 131–135.

[9] See: al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh al-shaykh Ẓāhir al-ʿUmar*, 11; al-ʿAwra, *Tārīkh wilāyat Sulaymān Bāshā al-ʿadl*, 111; Charles, *Les Echelles de Syrie et de Palestine*, 207.

or the *sanjaq* of Jerusalem or Acre. The feudal system in the region was in force from 1516 CE to 1865, with the exception of a short interlude during Ibrāhīm Pasha's campaign to Syria in 1831.[10]

The political situation

The geographical location of Jabal ʿĀmil, the religious affiliation of its inhabitants, and their political views made the region a fertile source of wars, conflicts, and political and intellectual innovation. Geographically it connected the center of government in Mt. Lebanon and the more distant provinces ranging from Palestine, with its important city of Acre, to Sidon and Tyre. It also connected the Biqāʿ Valley and Wādī al-Taym, which descends down to the seashore, the gateway to the outside world.

The fact that the local inhabitants belonged to a different religious community often put them on a direct collision course with the authorities. The Shīʿite inhabitants of Jabal ʿĀmil, who opposed the authorities and fought them politically and militarily, were put under economic pressure. The region, like all the provinces of Syria, came under the rule of the Mamluks, who built their state on the ruins of the Ayyubid regime and extended their rule over the whole area, which had known considerable political, demographic and religious upheavals. Before their time, too, the rulers of the Jabal ʿĀmil region had a different religious and social background than the local inhabitants.

Very little is known of the region before the sixth century AH (the twelfth century CE), except that the area was under the feudal rule of local families whose authority came directly from the central government. At the beginning of the 6th/12th century it was alternately under the rule of Bānyās, the county seat of Wādī al-Taym, of Ṣafad, or constituted a county on its own.[11] When the Fatimids of Egypt extended their rule over Syria Jabal ʿĀmil also came under their jurisdiction. When the area came under the rule of Saladin, who wrested it from the Crusaders, it received an appellation from the Emir Ḥusām al-Dīn b. Bishāra al-ʿĀmilī, whom Saladin appointed governor. He was a Shīʿite, and the fact that the region was named Bilād Bishāra after him is an indication of the esteem in which his administrative qualities were held.

After the Ayyubids came the Mamluks, whose main interests were military in nature. They became involved in matters of education and culture only if they had political consequences. This permitted the emergence of some independent educational activity in regions such as Jabal ʿĀmil, which were far removed from the district towns. The Mamluks took over the administrative division of Syria from the Ayybids, and gave district (*niyāba*) governors considerable independence.[12] Individual districts were thus ruled as practically independent units, with the district governor as a sultan in fact if not in name: he could wage war and even establish relations with foreign powers independently of the central government without, however, cutting himself off completely from it.

[10] Faraḥāt, *al-Thulāthī al-ʿāmilī fī ʿāṣr al-nahḍa*, 26.
[11] Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 43.
[12] Ḥittī, *Tārīkh Lubnān wa-Sūriyya*, 274.

This political disintegration was accompanied by military and intellectual repression, since district governors were afraid that the counties they ruled would become independent, just as they had shaken off the yoke of the central government. This state of affairs had considerable consequences for the Jabal ʿĀmil region, whose inhabitants were Shīʿites, unlike their rulers in Damascus, to whom they were subordinated politically, administratively and militarily. As a result, the cultural and educational flowering of the beginning of the fourteenth century waned. At the end of that century a crucial change occurred in the lives of the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil. After the Mamluks succeeded in killing a well-known Shīʿite historical figure, Shaykh Muḥammad Makkī al-Jizzīnī, known as "the first martyr" (d. 1384 CE), a Shīʿite educational revival occurred in the Jabal ʿĀmil region.

Already in the mid-fourteenth century CE the region became a place of refuge for Shʿites from Aleppo, Tripoli and Sidon. The clerics who came with them initiated a religious intellectual movement designed to strengthen the local population's adherence to the Shīʿite creed on the one hand and, on the other, to provide defenses against the campaigns which the region's changing rulers waged against Shīʿites.

Culture and education remained domains that were relatively free of foreign intrusion. Before that time local Shīʿites had already established contact with Shīʿite centers of education in Iraq. A representative from Iraq was sent, Abū al-Fatḥ al-Karājakī, a student of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd; he lived in Sidon and Tyre and wrote a number of books and epistles, among them *Talqīn awlād al-muʾminīn* (*Teaching the Children of the Believers*). Ismāʿīl b. al-Ḥusaynī al-ʿAwdī al-Jizzīnī was the first to go to Iraq to study (580/1184). He was followed by Ṭūwmān b. Aḥmad al-Manārī from the town of al-Manāra. Such educational journeys continued until the mid-fourteenth century without giving rise to an independent local educational system, since conditions in the area made it impossible to establish religious schools along the lines of the academies at al-Najaf and al-Ḥilla, which provided education for Shīʿite students from all lands. This changed with Muḥammad b. Makkī al-Jizzīnī from the town of Jizzīn. He made the journey to Iraq to further his education. For about ten years he moved between al-Ḥilla, Baghdad, Damascus, Egypt, Mecca and Medina, studying with scholars of the various Islamic schools of jurisprudence. He then returned to his native Jizzīn where he began efforts to bring about a Shīʿite intellectual and political revival. He succeeded in opening the first Shīʿite religious school around the year 1370, after the schools in Iraq and their libraries had been destroyed in the Mongol invasion. The Mamluk rulers of the region, however, were suspicious of Ibn Makkī's motives, and feared his growing influence and the possible emergence of an autonomous Shīʿite authority. Charges were brought against him and he was executed. He thus became the local Shīʿites' "first martyr".

Ibn Makkī's execution and the failure of his political movement did not, however, prevent a Shīʿite revival in Jabal ʿĀmil and the neighboring Biqāʿ Valley. This took the form of schools which were established by Ibn Makkī's students in the towns and villages of the region, in which they taught their teacher's views and political

theories. In a short time these students became recognized religious and judicial authorities whose cultural influence was dominant as well.[13]

At the beginning of the sixteenth century Syria came under Ottoman rule. Turkish ethnic and religious partisanship had a deep effect on the region. Matters were exacerbated by the conflict between the Ottomans and the Safawid state in Iran, who were followers of the same religious creed as the inhabitants of Jabal ʿĀmil. One of the first victims of the new policy was the religious scholar Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn b. ʿAlī al-Jibāʿī (996/1559), known as "the second martyr". He is the author of *Munyat al-murīd fī ādāb al-mufīd wal-mustafīd* (*Object of Desire for Seekers of the Useful and Beneficial*), the only extant educational book from that period. Following his death local Shīʿite scholars emigrated to Iran, Iraq and India, and Shīʿite education in the region regressed.

During most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries political events cast a shadow over education and instruction in the Jabal ʿĀmil region. The constant warfare between the local people and the Muʿīnī and Shihābī governors of Mt. Lebanon left the region in constant turmoil. The inhabitants tried to keep the wars away from their own country, but enemy attacks occasionally penetrated deeply into their territory, and as a result many of the region's mountainous areas feel into ruin.[14]

The entire period can be characterized as one of political upheaval and conflicting alliances. The one unifying characteristic was the enmity between the Ottoman governors and the local Shīʿite rulers of Jabal ʿĀmil. The resulting political instability had widespread effects, including an education. Many educated families therefore left for Iran and settled there, leaving behind a vacuum. Such periods of regression alternated with periods of educational expansion in times of greater stability.

A good example of how the political situation affected education is provided by the wars which Aḥmad Pasha, known as al-Jazzār, waged against Jabal ʿĀmil: "His troops attacked Jabal ʿĀmil, burnt down the villages, destroyed the houses, and took books and rare manuscripts from the libraries there, which they subsequently burned in Acre. The religious leaders of Jabal ʿĀmil complained to Istanbul, but the government of the Porte forwarded the complaint to him verbatim, so he avenged himself on those who had signed it. His men exceeded all bounds in their killing and slaughter of this people. He arrested a group of notables and had them strangled to death in the prisons of Acre. Those of them who survived he expelled into the neighboring lands. The religious leaders and other people of erudition emigrated to distant Muslim lands such as India, Iraq and Afghanistan".[15] One of the results of al-Jazzār's war against Jabal ʿĀmil was that the latter lost the autonomy which it had enjoyed previously for a certain period of time, during which religious schools flourished, as did the writing of religious literature. It is reported that al-Jazzār burned five-thousand manuscripts taken from the Jabal ʿĀmil region in the bakeries of Acre: "The books of Jabal ʿĀmil kept the ovens of Acre hot for a whole week; this was a very great blow to knowledge and to the erudite".[16] At the same time Shīʿite religious

[13] Al-Muhājir, *al-Hijra al-ʿāmiliyya*, 59.
[14] Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 113.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[16] Aḥmad Riḍā, "al-Matāwila aw al-shīʿa fī Jabal ʿĀmil", *al-ʿIrfān*, vol. 2 (1910), 8:387.

leaders were dragged to Acre and burned or strangled to death. The resulting desolation also meant that the existing Shīʿite schools were closed. A whole political and educational period came to an end. Only with al-Jazzār's death did a new phase begin.

The economic situation

Education in the Jabal ʿĀmil region was not affected by the overall economic situation, since the local society was not integrated into the central government which ran the economy. The local enmity towards both the Mamluk and the Ottoman authorities prevented the emergence of economic institutions and workplaces. The Shīʿites had to finance their religious teachers by themselves. The teachers either established schools or taught at their own homes. A school's power and the number of its students thus depended on the legal and financial wherewithal available to them, which the authorities did not put their hands on. These religious schools were not part of an organized system; rather, each school was completely controlled by its owner, who was teacher, headmaster and financer rolled into one. When he died, often the school would close, unless someone was found who was willing to continue his work.

During the whole Mamluk period, and also for a great part of the Ottoman period, Jabal ʿĀmil's economy was not in any way different from that of other parts of Syria. Agriculture was the main occupation in the villages and the areas in the vicinity of rivers; commerce was the profession of many in the coastal areas, especially Tyre. Passable roads permitted the movement of goods to even the most remote villages and markets were held in the larger towns. The most important of these were the market in al-Nabaṭiyya, held every Monday, at Bint Jubayl every Thursday, at Jawayya every Saturday and at ʿAdīsa every Wednesday. Some of these markets still take place today.

The local economy was affected by political developments, although both Mamluk and Ottoman authorities adopted the same practice of giving land to feudal families in return for an annual tax. The feudal families bought the land and the farmers worked it on behalf of these families. The authorities did not intervene at the local level as long as the tax due to them was paid.[17]

This feudal arrangement was of a local character, not in accordance with a general system. The local leader or head of family had absolute power, as long as their actions were in keeping with the interests of the provincial governors under whose jurisdiction the Jabal ʿĀmil region was located.

To the two afore-mentioned groups we must add that of Shīʿite religious scholars. These came from the peasant class, but enjoyed considerable prestige. These religious leaders, who were entrusted with dispensing justice, lived off the fifth-tax[18]

[17] Āl Ṣafā, *Ta'rīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 90.

[18] The "fifth" was a voluntary tax of 20% on annual earnings, based on an interpretation of Q 8:41: "And know that whatever booty you acquire [in war], one-fifth thereof belongs to God and the Apostle, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer". This verse was interpreted to require the payment of the fifth to clerics, who exerted themselves on behalf of the faith. The payment also included "the Imam's share", i.e. the share of the twelfth, occulted, Imam. For more on the "fifth" see: Abdul Aziz Sachedina, "Al-Khums: The Fifth in the Imamite Legal System", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 39 (1980), 275–289.

and alms. More importantly, among Shīʿites they represented religious authority, as the heirs of the Imāms.

The social situation

In the period between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries CE social disparities were considerable, due to the differences in the economic situation and the social standing of various groups in Jabal ʿĀmil society.

A distinct social group relevant to the topic at hand consisted of families of the religiously erudite. These were given the name of "the religious families". At least one member of each household in this group was well-versed in religious matters. This knowledge was usually transmitted from father to son. The families in question possessed their own unique social, religious and cultural customs, and enjoyed the respect of the other social groups in the region, thanks to the fact that the local authorities showed a keen desire to earn their favor.[19]

The continued existence of these families, due to the prestige enjoyed by their members, ensured that Shīʿite religious education in the region in fact never ceased completely.

Social factors were thus paramount in preserving religious education. The establishment of schools was nearly always associated with "the religious families", one or more of which would take the initiative and establish an institution of learning, often in the home, where the children of these families would naturally be among the first students. In this way a number of families emerged in which learning was passed on from one generation to the next for centuries. Some such families still do this to this very day, among them al-Ḥurr, Faḍl Allāh, Amīn, and Shams al-Dīn.

The sources used in the present study

With the exception of a single book, Zayn al-Dīn b. ʿAlī's above-mentioned *Munyat al-murīd fī ādāb al-mufīd wal-mustafīd*, none of the sources used in the present study focus exclusively on religious instruction in the Jabal ʿĀmil region. Most of the sources, as will become clear below, are of a historical character. Below we list the most important compositions we used:

A) *Al-Lumʿa al-dimashqiyya*, a book on religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*) by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Jamāl al-Dīn b. Makkī al-Jizzīnī al-ʿĀmilī, known as "the first martyr" (d. 786/1384). The author wrote this work in seven days while imprisoned in Damascus, awaiting his execution. The only relevant reference available to him was *al-Mukhtaṣar al-nāfiʿ*. After the author's death, an Introduction was added by Muḥammad Mahdī al-Āṣafī, who provided some biographical details about the author, an account of his educational activities, and some pointers on matters of jurisprudence. The book quickly became a favorite text in Shīʿite institutions of learning, and remains so to this day. It is well-organized, concise and written in rhymed prose.

[19] *Ibid.*, 92.

B) *Munyat al-murīd fī ādāb al-mufīd wal-mustafīd* by Zayn al-Dīn b. ʿAlī al-Jabʿī, known as "the second martyr" (d. 966/1559). This is the single work that is most relevant to our study, written by a pioneer of Shīʿite education in the Jabal ʿĀmil region. The book deals with the importance of education, the student-teacher relationship, characteristics of students and teachers, and so on. It provides a good indication of the educational concerns of the time and place dealt with in the present study.

The book consists of four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction gives an outline of the virtues of knowledge and its bearers according to the Qurʾān and prophetic tradition. Chapter One deals with the proper ways of teaching and learning. Chapter Two concerns the rules of giving judicial rulings (*fatwa*). Chapter Three provides rules of argumentation. Chapter Four gives rules for writing books, the instruments of passing on knowledge. The conclusion provides an overview of the kinds of knowledge, and gives some advice to those who want to learn. The book exists in a great number of manuscripts and printed editions, owing to its continuing great popularity among Shīʿite scholars and students.

C) *Amal al-āmil* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmilī, known as al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1692). This is a biographical work, dealing with prominent Shīʿite religious leaders in the Jabal ʿĀmil region, including teachers and the schools where they studied and taught. The work is significant for our purposes mainly because its author lived in the period covered in the present study and provides a genuine picture of education in his times.

D) *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil* by al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn (d. 1952). This is a most important source for the present study, since it gives a broad introduction to the region's history, geography and demography. It describes the history of Shīʿite religious schools, the topics taught there and the instruction methods they used.

E) *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, by the same author. This is an encyclopedia of Shīʿite scholars. The entries on erudite members of the Jabal ʿĀmil Shīʿite community contain information on schools and teaching methods.

F) *Tārīkh al-tarbiya ʿinda al-imāmiyya wa-aslāfihim min al-shīʿa* by the contemporary writer ʿAbd Allāh Dakhīl al-Fayyāḍ. The book describes educational aims and textbooks among Shīʿites in general. Much of what appears in it is relevant to the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil as well.

G) *Shīʿī Scholars of the Nineteenth Century* by Meir Litvak. This book deals with religious education in the Shīʿite *ḥawza*s of al-Najaf and Karbalāʾ in Iraq and provides information on the social and political relations among teachers, the stages of religious instruction, how the schools support themselves financially, and also the community leadership role of Shīʿite scholars and their confrontations with the scholars of the Sunnī government in Baghdad. Much of what is said in this work can be applied to the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil as well, in light of the fact that a great many of the region's scholars were graduates of the Iraqi *ḥawza*s, and that the educational aims of the latter were consistent with the aims of Shīʿite education everywhere.

Shīʿite places of instruction

Shīʿite educational activities in the Jabal ʿĀmil region took place in a number of locations, as follows:

A) Elementary schools (kuttāb)[20]

The term *kuttāb* in Arabic refers to a place where the young are taught.[21] This pre-Islamic institution was retained following the emergence of Islam, thanks to the importance which adherents of the new religion attached to literacy. Kuttābs are of two types; those whose main function is to teach reading and writing are generally located in teachers' homes, whereas those specializing in teaching the Qurʾān and the principles of the Muslim religion are usually located in mosques.[22]

The present study has found only fleeting signs of the establishment of Shīʿite *kuttāb*s in the Jabal ʿĀmil region during the period in question. This is probably due to the fact that since these institutions dealt with primary education they differed in no respect from similar institutions among other Muslims and in other regions. It would indeed appear that as far as the topics taught in their *kuttāb*s are concerned, i.e. reading, writing, Qurʾān and Arabic, they did not differ from those of their Sunnī neighbors, although it is likely that they sent their children to separate schools and not to the Sunnī institutions financed by the government. Muḥsin al-Amīn reports that in the region some *kuttāb*s were financed by the inhabitants and others by the government[23] without, however, providing any further details.

B) Scholars' homes

A number of Shīʿite jurists (*faqīh*) in the Jabal ʿĀmil region turned their homes into centers of instruction; in time these developed into full-fledged educational institutions which provided a complete course of instruction in the religious sciences.

In order to be able to give instruction at home, an appropriate space was of course needed. A scholar's home would therefore contain a relatively large hall where he could give lessons to students. The number of students depended crucially on the teacher's personality, prestige and financial wherewithal. The teacher would spend on his students' upkeep as the amount of money he received from the fifth and alms permitted him. A scholar's first students would be his own sons, who grew up in an atmosphere conducive to study. Often a teacher would eventually be succeeded by his sons. To take one example, "the first martyr" (Shaykh Muḥammad b. Makkī al-ʿĀmilī) began his own scholarly career at home, where his father, Shaykh Makkī Jamāl al-Dīn, provided a strong impetus to learning, and where he would also be present at meetings where the region's most prominent scholars would provide him with an opportunity for thought, debate and expressing his opinion.[24]

[20] For details on this institution see J.M. Landau, "Kuttāb", *EI*[2] (1986), vol. V, 567–570; Khalil A. Totah, *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education*, New-York, 1926, 15ff.; Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim Education*, Beirut, 1954, 16–23.

[21] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. "k t b".

[22] Al-Rashadāt, *al-Madkhal ilā al-tarbiya wal-taʿlīm*, 139.

[23] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 186.

[24] Al-Āṣafī, *Muqaddimat al-lumʿa al-dimashqiyya*, 81.

"The second martyr" (al-Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn al-Jabʿī al-ʿĀmilī), too, learned Arabic and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) from his father, until the latter's death.[25] Some scholars gave the task of educating their sons to one of their students, as "the second martyr" did with respect to his own son Ḥasan:[26] "And so he entrusted his instruction in the hands of one of his students, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Ṣāyigh".[27]

A complete survey of the biographies of all the region's Shīʿite scholars in the period between "the first martyr" and the middle of the eighteenth century, whether those mentioned in al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī's *Amal al-āmil* or in Muḥsin al-Amīn's *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, would reveal that most of them at first studied either with their father or with someone whom their father entrusted with their education. After the end of the primary stage of learning the Qurʾān and Arabic, in what can be considered a kind of *kuttāb*, students would move on to the next stage, either with the same teacher or with another.

In this kind of education no specific system or method was followed. Each teacher taught his students as he saw fit, in accordance with his own abilities and those of his students. The number of students and their ages were of less importance than their ability to understand the lesson.

Students came to the schools of Jabal ʿĀmil from outside the region as well. For example, Nāṣir b. Ibrāhīm al-Buwayhī[28] betook himself to the town of ʿAynāthā in order to study with Shaykh Ẓahīr al-Dīn b. al-Ḥusām al-ʿĀmilī al-ʿAynāthī[29] and remained there until his death.

Others who came to Jabal ʿĀmil from abroad; one of them was the *mawlā* ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Tustarī (d. 1021/1612), a prominent scholar from Iran who came to be confirmed by the Shaykh Niʿmat Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Khātūn al-ʿĀmilī al-ʿAynāthī and his son Aḥmad b. Niʿmat Allāh b. Khātūn al-ʿAynāthī. Another one was Aḥmad b. Fahd al-Ḥillī (d. 1437 CE), author of *ʿUddat al-dāʿī wa-najāḥ al-masāʿī*, who came to Jizzīn to be confirmed by Shaykh ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Makkī al-Jizzīnī al-ʿĀmilī, son of "the first martyr".[30] Shaykh ʿAlī b. Hilāl al-Jazāʾirī also invited Sayyid Ḥusayn b. Ḥaydar al-Karakī al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1665 CE) to Karak Nūḥ, where he taught.[31]

Among the scholarly families of the Jabal ʿĀmil region, instruction was passed on from one generation to the next. In every family at least one member of every generation studied with his father, who provided the proper atmosphere of learning. There were, however, other reasons as well why instruction was given in the home. The

[25] Darwīsh, *Jabal ʿĀmil bayna 1526–1697*, 178.

[26] His full name is Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn (d. 1586 CE). Originally from Jabal ʿĀmil, he eventually moved to Iraq and studied there. His most important composition is *Maʿālim al-dīn wa-malādhdh al-mujtahidīn*; see his Introduction, 4.

[27] Al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 41:167.

[28] The writer, poet and jurist Nāṣir b. Ibrāhīm al-Buwayhī al-ʿĀmilī al-ʿAynāthī (d. 1439 CE). He is mentioned by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī among the scholars who came to the region in his youth. He lived and died in ʿAynātha. For more details on hims see: al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 1:187.

[29] A scholar and jurist who taught in the town of ʿAynātha. Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī describes him as a prominent shaykh and jurist. For more details see: *ibid.*, 1:188.

[30] Al-Iṣbahānī, *Riyāḍ al-ʿulamāʾ*, 1:64.

[31] Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, *Rijāl al-sayyid Baḥr al-ʿUlūm*, 2:107.

overall unsettled political conditions made it prudent to stay out of the public eye. Even where the local feudal rulers belonged to the Shīʿite community and did not interfere in educational activities, the Mamluk and Ottoman authorities were never loathe keep such activities under supervision and control. The frequent wars in the region were another cause for unease and instability, since schools were primary targets for destruction, as were libraries, whose books were often burned. As a result many Shīʿite scholars in the Jabal ʿĀmil region chose to set up schools in their own homes. In this way they ensured that education did not cease in the region despite the political unrest.

Economic considerations were also important. The costs of running a school in one's home were naturally lower than if a separate institution had to be maintained. Students would come to their teacher's home to study and then go back to their own homes, and thus the teacher did not have to look after his students' physical needs.

Yet another reason for the emergence of schools in scholars' homes was that prospective students would seek out scholars known for their erudition, in preference to attending a regular school with its fixed curriculum. This happened in particular in the case of scholars who taught subjects such as mathematics, arithmetic and philosophy, which were not required subjects in the schools and were only taught as time permitted.

C) Schools

Shīʿite religious schools are first attested in the Jabal ʿĀmil region in the thirteenth century CE. Since that time some such schools always existed; if one school was closed, another opened in its stead. In the fourteenth century schools appeared in many towns and villages in the region. Some of these schools became quite well-known, and drew students from the neighboring lands as well. In what follows we describe these schools and their academic activities.[32]

The school in Jizzīn

This was the first school to be established in the Jabal ʿĀmil region.[33] It was founded by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makkī al-Jizzīnī al-ʿĀmilī, known also as "the first martyr"[34] (d. 1384 CE). The town of Jizzīn was chosen as the site of the school because of its reputation as a historical Shīʿite strongpoint which defied attacks by the Crusaders, and later the Mamluks. It was home to a number of prominent Shīʿite scholars before the founding of the school and had connections to the village of Mashghara, a historical Shīʿite settlement, "a fountain of Shīʿite scholars in Jabal ʿĀmil until the beginning of the thirteenth century AH, and populated entirely by

[32] Al-Ḥurr, *Maʿālim al-adab al-ʿāmilī*, 79–80.

[33] Al-Bustānī, *Tārīkh al-taʿlīm fī lubnān*, 169.

[34] Muḥammad b. Makkī b. Shams al-Dīn; he was born in Jizzīn (1334 CE) and studied first there and later in the town of al-Ḥilla in Iraq. Later he traveled to Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Jerusalem and Egypt, and eventually returned to Jizzīn and opened a school there. A well-known Islamic jurist, he wrote a voluminous book on jurisprudence entitled *al-Lumʿa al-dimashqiyya*. He also wrote mystical poetry. For more details see above and Makkī, *al-Ḥayāt al-fikriyya wal-adabiyya fī Jabal ʿĀmil*, 29.

Shīʿites".[35] A number of factors, political and intellectual, as well as geographic and demographic, affected the choice of Jizzīn as the place where the school was established. The establishment of a school in the region at the time was probably due to the Mongol invasion of the Middle East, which brought an end to teaching in the school at Najaf, caused great destruction in Baghdad, and was attended by burning of schools and libraries throughout Iraq. Until that time Shīʿites from the Jabal ʿĀmil region who wanted an education went to al-Najaf. "The first martyr" therefore decided that in the wake of events in Iraq it was time to establish a school in the region, as a sign of its cultural independence, in addition to the relative political independence it enjoyed at the time.[36]

The school's prestige was derived from that of its founder, who did his utmost to enhance the level of religious instruction in the town, which as a result "was filled with eager students who came from near and far; it was the first time that Jabal ʿĀmil was the center of a significant activity".[37]

The school in Jizzīn was a success. Many of its graduates became scholars and jurists who spread the Shīʿte creed and established schools in the region.[38]

One of the school's unusual virtues was that it accepted a number of women students, who attained a level of knowledge which was rare in those days when women were generally oppressed. Among them was Fāṭima, Umm al-Ḥasan, sister of "the first martyr, whom her male colleagues entrusted with legal rulings having to do with the religious affairs of women.[39]

The school's great prestige is described as follows in one of our sources: "The school of Jizzīn became known far and wide. It was heavily populated, with a large mosque and a tall minaret. Among its staff were twelve senior scholars. Jizzīn thus attracted travelers, seekers of knowledge and lovers of literature".[40]

The school was visited by numerous prominent scholars, as demonstrated by the poets who vied with each other in creating verses for the celebrations held in the school.[41]

The school survived the execution of its founder in 1384 CE,[42] but the conflict between Shīʿites and Druze eventually undermined its foundations after centuries of activity. The town of Jizzīn is located on the border between Jabal ʿĀmil and the Druze area of Bilād Shūf, and many Shīʿites left it after a battle between the two camps[43] which took place in 1171/1757. They were replaced by Christian peasants.[44]

[35] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 364.
[36] Al-Ḥurr, *Maʿālim al-adab al-ʿāmilī*, 79–80.
[37] Al-Muhājir, *al-Hijra al-ʿāmiliyya ilā Īrān*, 6.
[38] Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 235.
[39] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʾĀmil*, 150; al-Ḥurr, *Maʿālim al-adab al-ʿāmilī*, 80.
[40] Muruwwa, *Tārīkh Jubāʿ*, 33.
[41] For example, at the beginning of the thirteenth century CE a well-known Shīʿite legist, Ismāʿīl b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-ʿAwadī al-Asadī died. He was elegized by the local poet Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusām. For details see: Muruwwa, *Tārīkh Jubāʿ*, 33; Makkī, *al-Ḥaraka al-fikriyya wal-adabiyya fī Jabal ʿĀmil*, 29.
[42] He was executed in Damascus after having been imprisoned in the local fortress for eleven months. After the execution he was put on a cross and then his body was burned, on June 29, 1384. See Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 235.
[43] Abū Shaqrā, *al-Ḥarakāt fī Lubnān*.., 157.
[44] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 150; Abū Shaqrā, *al-Ḥarakāt fi Lubnān*, 157.

The school in Mays al-Jabal[45]

Historically and educationally this school was second only to the one in Jizzīn.[46] It was founded by Shaykh ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī al-Maysī, known among Shīʿite scholars as "the first authority of Mays" (d. 1526 CE).[47] The school achieved fame thanks to the prestige of its founder, and to its standing as a scientific *ḥawza* with a well-organized curriculum. For this reason it attracted students from Syria, Iraq and Iran. At times the number of students approached four-hundred. Among the well-known personalities who attended it were Zayn al-Dīn b. ʿAlī al-Jabʿī al-ʿĀmilī ("the second martyr") and the erudite scholars Aḥmad b. Tāj al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī al-Maysī and Shaykh Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī, and others.[48]

The biographies of many of its graduates provide proof that the school remained in operation for a considerable time after its founder's death.[49]

The school in Shaqrā'[50]

This school was founded by the scholar Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ḥaydar al-Ḥusaynī al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1780 CE) in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was able to flourish and excel in religious studies thanks to an income from numerous endowments (*waqf*), which made it independent of outside aid.[51]

The school was large, with over four-hundred students and more than forty classrooms. Its heyday was during the lifetime of the founder, who died in 1780. Subsequent mismanagement and academic weakness caused it to deteriorate, until the school's students brought in the founder's grandson, ʿAlī al-Amīn.

The school was famous for its promotion of literature. The students were known for their frequent poetry contests. It is related that their voices, as they committed their lessons to memory at night, could be heard in the neighboring village of Majdal Silim.[52]

The civil strife in the region eventually proved too much for the school, which closed its gates in 1896. Among its prominent graduates were Ḥusayn b. Mūsā al-Ḥusaynī, the poet Ibrāhīm Yahyā[53] and others, the majority of whom emigrated to Iraq and Iran.[54]

[45] The village of Mays al-Jabal is located in the county of Marjʿuyūn, about 114 km south of Beirut. For more details see: *Lubnān tārīkh siyāsa wa-ḥaḍāra – dalīl al-mudun wal-qurā wa-ʿā'ilātihā*, 15:182.
[46] Al-Bustānī, *Tārīkh al-tarbiya wal-taʿlīm fī Lubnān*, 170.
[47] Ḥamāda, *al-Taʿlīm fī Jabal ʿĀmil*, 23.
[48] Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 137; al-Ḥurr, *Maʿālim al-adab al-ʿāmilī*, 81–82.
[49] Many of the scholars who graduated from the school in Mays al-Jabal are mentioned by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī in his *Amal al-āmāl*. For details see the work in question, 6.
[50] The village of Shaqrā' is in the county of Bint Jubayl, some 116 km south of Beirut. For more details on it see: *Lubnān tārīkh siyāsa wa-ḥaḍāra - dalīl al-mudun wal-qurā wa-ʿā'ilātihā*, 15:114.
[51] This was the first school in the region with endowments, consisting of land, olive trees, a house and a bakery. Some of these are still extant. For details see: al-Amīm, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 183; Makkī, *al-Ḥayāt al-fikriyya wal-adabiyya fī Jabal ʿĀmil*, 32.
[52] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 150.
[53] For details about him see our "The Shīʿite Poet Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-ʿĀmilī: a Faithful Picture of His Age", *al-Karmal* 27 (2006), 37–94 (Arabic).
[54] Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 279; al-Ḥurr, *Maʿālim al-adab al-ʿāmilī*, 84; al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 183.

The school in ʿAynāthā[55]

The village of ʿAynāthā is home to two of the region's best-known scholarly families, the Khātūn and the Faḍl Allāh. Sayyid Najīb b. Yaḥyā al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh al-Ḥusaynī established the school there.[56] It was attended by students from outside the region as well. Nāṣir al-Buwayhī, from Iran, lived there and studied under its scholars.[57] The town became a center for advanced Islamic studies after the Khātūn family founded a *ḥawza* there toward the end of the nineteenth century.

The school in Juwayyā[58]

Members of the Khātūn[59] family moved to Juwayyā and founded a religious school in this village.[60] Among its graduates were numerous scholars. Like other schools in the area it experienced a period of decline during the region's occupation by al-Jazzār, which did not end until the latter's death, when a new period in the intellectual life of Jabal ʿĀmil began.

Teaching methods in the schools of Jabal ʿĀmil

The scholars who founded the Shīʿite schools in the Jabal ʿĀmil region adopted the teaching methods they had learned in Iraq, and adapted them to the intellectual and financial capabilities of the local students.

Teaching methods in organized schools differed from those used in scholars' homes. We possess two sources that deal with the teaching methods used in the region, "the second martyr's" *Munyat al-murīd fī ādāb al-mufīd wal-mustafīd* and Muḥsin al-Amīn's *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil.*

At night students went over the lesson they had read the preceding day, or the teacher would read a lesson which he would explain on the following day. In class during the day, each student came with the book containing the lesson to be read. All opened their books to the place where the lesson was, and one of the students would read a clause while the rest listened. The reading would begin with the formulas "In the name of Allah the kind the merciful", "There is no God but Allah" and "We pray for the Prophet and his family", followed by a recitation of the text to be learned. If the student made a mistake he would be corrected by the teacher or one of the other students. Once the recitation was over the teacher would take a

[55] ʿAynāthā, today of town of 13,000 inhabitants, is located in southern Lebanon, some 120 km south of Beirut. In some periods it hosted more Shīʿite scholars than any other town in the region. For more details see: "ʿAynāthā manbaʿ al-ʿulamāʾ wal-shuʿarā" (in Arabic) at http://hassan.isom.com; al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 327–331; *Lubnān tārīkh siyāsa wa-ḥaḍāra - dalīl al-mudun wal-qurā wa-ʿāʾilātihā*, 5:135.

[56] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 186–187.

[57] Sharaf al-Dīn, *Majallat al-ʿirfān* 71, 10:75.

[58] Juwayyā is in the county of Tyre, 97 km south of Beirut. For more details on it, see: *Lubnān tārīkh siyāsa wa-ḥaḍāra - dalīl al-mudun wal-qurā wa-ʿāʾilātihā*,, 72:15.

[59] The Khātūn family, one of the "religious families" of Jabal ʿĀmil with many scholars among its members, is an offshoot of the Umayya clan. The village, close to Rashāf, is in ruins today. For more details see: Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 270, note no. 1.

[60] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 183–184.

book from one of the students, and after the usual formulas begin to explain the passage.[61]

The preceding description fits the method of instruction at the elementary level, where the only aids to teaching were the teacher's own explanations and the discussion in the classroom. The teacher's explanation of the text being studied could also include criticism, whenever the teacher's own opinion differed from that of the author. The teacher would also explain passages in which the author was unclear or there was an error in the text. Students asked about points in the text which they did not understand or argued with the teacher if his explanation did not seem correct to them. Other students in the class would also participate in the discussion.[62]

Unlike direct dictation or inculcation, the method described here encouraged debate among students, and created an atmosphere of dialogue concerning issues on which there was disagreement. The method called for the teacher's approval; it was in any case the preferred way for students of religion in the Jabal ʿĀmil region.[63]

The climate of study was dictated to no small degree by the teacher's personality: "If a student disturbed or misbehaved his teacher would stop him and give him a rebuke. The students sat before the *shaykh* on their knees until the end of the lesson".[64]

In a school the teacher was required to stick to the schedule and to the books he was told to teach; it was his task to explain the text and give his own comments as he saw fit, and also to keep order in the classroom. The teacher's explanations, however, were supervised by the students themselves. The questions they posed made it necessary for the teacher to prepare well for the lesson. In the afternoon the students would gather to review the lesson and commit it to memory.[65] Every Friday night the teacher would bring his students together and ask them questions, in a kind of weekly exam.

How the schools were financed

Shīʿite religious education in the Jabal ʿĀmil region was financed by income from the "fifth" (*khums*),[66] charitable contributions, as well as bequests and endowments. As we saw above, the first school in the region with endowments of its own was in Shaqrāʾ, "which had land, olive trees, a house and a bakery".[67] Income from the "fifth" provided the means to build schools and also provide for students' needs.

This state of affairs had the effect of making schools quite independent of the central government, and even of the local leadership. As a result the freedom of instruction was maintained and when political pressure was brought to bear on scholars, for example in cases where they were summoned to Iran, it was not always effective. Thus Shaykh Muḥammad b. Makkī, the founder of the school in Jizzīn, did not heed

[61] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 190.
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] Al-Fayyāḍ, *Tārīkh al-tarbiya ʿinda al-imāmiyya*, 240.
[64] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 190.
[65] *Ibid.*, 191.
[66] Cf. above, footnote 8.
[67] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 183.

the summons of the king of Khurasān, ʿAlī b. al-Muʾayyad[68] (ruled 1364–1381 CE). In the same manner "the second martyr", his son and his grandson all refused to leave Jabal ʿĀmil and move to Iṣfahān.

In some cases the local scholars' worry lest they be forced to leave caused them to refrain from the pilgrimage to the shrine of the eight twelver Imam, ʿAlī al-Riḍā[69] (d. 818 CE). Despite their great desire to do so, they stayed put so as not to be summoned when they were closer to centers of Shīʿite rule.[70]

The Islamic jurists who worked as teachers lived a simple life, devoid of luxury. The contributions and direct assistance they received from the local populace sufficed for their needs. They did not get a salary, since Shīʿite clerics consider the teaching of religion to be an act of piety, especially since it was conducive to the dissemination of the Shīʿite creed. Local scholars continually resisted any interference by local political leaders in the affairs of their schools, and guarded their independence even in the face of dwindling financial resources. Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn relates of his grandfather, Sayyid ʿAlī al-Amīn, that he "used to write to neighboring villages asking for alms for his students. One day he was informed that some villagers said "We want to give away Ḥamad Albīk's[71] (1269/1852) horsemen and Sayyid ʿAlī al-Amīn's students". The latter was angered by this comment and stopped writing to his students that they should accept alms. He said to them: "Whoever is capable of looking after himself can stay, and those who cannot should go where they want". So a number of students left and some remained, but the school suffered".[72]

This example demonstrates how tightly the school's fate was bound up with that of its founder, and how much it depended on his own financial situation. When money became scarce the number of students dropped, and did not rise again until the necessary funds had been found. In most cases during the period discussed in the present study, when the founder died the school closed down. The only exceptions occurred when someone else was found who was willing and able to take over.

From the preceding discussion we conclude that Shīʿite religious education, whether in scholars' homes or in *kuttāb*s or schools, were quite unlike educational institutions in the normal sense of the word. Rather, they arose out of a society to which they conformed and into which they were integrated, so that they participated in all the crises and wars which that society experienced.

[68] ʿAlī b. al-Muʾayyad al-Ṭūsī, a governor of the province of Khurasān in Iran; for more details on him see: al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 6:4.

[69] For more details on him see: B. Lewis, "ʿAlī al-Riḍā", *EI²* (1960), vol. !, 399–400.

[70] Al-Muṭṭaharī, *al-Islām wa-Īrān*, 323.

[71] Ḥamad Albīk al-Maḥmūd was one of the best-known leaders of the al-Ṣaghīr family after Nāṣīf al-Naṣṣār. He rebelled against the Egyptian and Shihābite rule in the Jabal ʿĀmil region and allied himself with the Ottoman army in fighting against the Egyptians. His bravery earned him the praise of the Ottoman commander ʿIzzat Pasha, who appointed him governor of Jabal ʿĀmil and gave him the title of "Chief Shaykh of the Land of Bishāra". When he died in 1852 his brother's grandson buried him in the shrine of the Prophet Joshua. For details on him see: al-Faqīh, *Jabal ʿĀmil fī al-tārīkh*, 295ff.; Yāsīn Suwayd, "Jabal ʿĀmil in the period of the two principalities, the houses of al-Maʿnī and Shihāb (1516–1842)", URL: www.tibneen.com (Arabic).

[72] Al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 183.

Classification of teachers

The teachers who provided Shīʿite religious instruction in the Jabal ʿĀmil region can be classified into a number of groups, in accordance with the level of education in which they were involved:

A) Teachers in *kuttāb*s taught young boys the principles of reading and writing, in general by way of learning and memorizing the Qurʾān. Such teachers were called *muʾaddib* (literally: "chastisers"), since disciplining their wards was one of their tasks.

B) Teachers of the "preliminaries" (*muqaddimāt*) stage.[73] This was the first stage of instruction, usually in the scholar's home. The teachers are usually more advanced students.

C) Teachers of advanced studies. These are teachers who have completed their juridical and theological studies. The teachers at this stage of instruction, called "surfaces" (*suṭūḥ*),[74] specialize in certain topics, such as religious jurisprudence, grammar, etc.

D) Jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) and *mujtahid*s (scholars capable of independent judgment). These are the teachers of the highest rank, who give lectures not dependent on a specific text. These lectures are written down by students and turned into textbook material. The students of these teachers are often those at the most advanced stage of study, called "outside research" (*baḥth khārij*). The topics on which these teachers lecture are quite varied, but the focus is on teaching jurisprudence by way of inference and deduction, at times also using books on the topic written by the teachers themselves.

The economic and material condition of teachers

The economic standing of a teacher depended on the educational level at which he taught and on his professional expertise. The teachers in a *kuttāb* were usually intellectually inferior to those at more advanced stages, and this was reflected in the compensation they received. We have no specific information about the economic situation of *kuttāb* teachers in the Jabal ʿĀmil region, since our historical

[73] At this stage instruction is usually given on an individual basis, or in very small groups. Students remain at this level for between two and four years, depending on their progress. The topics in the curriculum include morphology, syntax, rhetoric, logic and Arabic literature. For more details see: Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, "Jāmiʿat al-Najaf wa-jāmiʿat al-qarawiyyīna", *Majallat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī* 11 (1964), 297; Khalid Sindawi, "Modern Shīʿite Religious *Ḥawza* Instruction and Its Role in Shaping Shīʿite Identity (The *Ḥawza*s of al-Najaf and Qumm as a Case Study)", *Middle Eastern Studies* (Forthcoming).

[74] This stage consists of two parts, "surfaces of jurisprudence" (*suṭūḥ al-fiqh*) and "upper surfaces" (*al-suṭūḥ al-ʿulyā*). In addition to Islamic jurisprudence and theology, studies at this stage also include introductory philosophy astronomy, and Qurʾānic exegesis. Studies at this stage, which can last between four and five years, are usually on an individual basis or in very small groups. Students can choose courses and books freely, and are not supervised. Student and teacher are free to debate and criticize, since the purpose of study at this stage is to enhance the student's powers of observation. For more details see: Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, "Jāmiʿat al-Najaf wa-jāmiʿat al-qarawiyyīna", 297–298; Sindawi, "Modern Shīʿite Religious *Ḥawza*." *Middle Eastern Studies* (Forthcoming).

sources have not deemed the topic worthy of mention. What we do know is that such teachers were paid by their students as long as they refrained from teaching religious subjects (because of certain traditions which explicitly forbade taking money for teaching the Qurʿān).[75] Teachers at all the more advanced levels refused to be paid, since they considered what they did to be an act of piety and a religious mission.

The material needs of Shīʿite teachers in the Jabal ʿĀmil region were met by the society in which they lived. The village provided lodging and a yearly stipend, and the "fifth" covered the teacher's monthly expenses as well as the needs of students and the poor. The situation of teachers was thus not very different from others in their vicinity. They were often quite poor, unless they were members of well-to-do families.

Teachers enjoyed considerable prestige, especially among the pious, since they were perceived as helping disseminate the message of religion.[76] The relatively high social standing of teachers is reflected in the various titles of veneration used by students to refer to their teachers, and by historians in their biographies. Thus, for example, "the second martyr" in his Introduction to his commentary on *al-Lumʿa al-dimashqiyya* describes "the first martyr" as "our *shaykh*, our *imam*, the indubitable, the meticulous scholar, who combines the virtue of knowledge and happiness and the rank of work and martyrdom, the felicitous imam Abū ʿAbd Allāh, the martyr Muḥammad b. Makkī".[77] The son of "the second martyr" describes his own teacher as "the venerable master, our Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī".[78] An examination of the titles used in these descriptions reveals a mixture of religious ("scholar", "imam", "martyr") and social ("shaykh", "master") characterizations, reflecting the respect given to teachers, viewed as carrying on a mission going back to the times of the Prophet and the imams of Twelver Shīʿism.

Teachers' titles

Teachers were given numerous titles in accordance with their various positions. Most of these titles were common among Muslims and not given just to teachers. The following titles deserve mention.

A) *Al-Muʾaddib* (literally: "the discipliner"). This title was given to teachers of the very young, because of their job of instilling their charges with general Islamic values. Some Shīʿite scholars and local leaders hired private tutors of this type for their children, who were taught at home the basics of reading and writing, prayer, and the principles of religion.

B) *Al-Shaykh*. Literally this word means "old man".[79] Figuratively it is used to denote a person of knowledge and standing. The title of *shaykh* was often used for referring to teachers, in particular when they were prominent personalities. Thus it is

[75] Fayyāḍ, *Tārīkh al-tarbiya ʿinda al-imāmiyya*, 127.
[76] *Ibid.*, 135.
[77] "The second martyr", *al-Rawḍa al-bahiyya fī al-lumʿa al-dimashqiyya*, 1:5.
[78] Zayn al-Dīn, *Maʿālim al-dīn wa-maladhdh al-mujtahidīn*, 10.
[79] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. "sh y kh".

related of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd that "he produced a number of superior *shaykh*s".[80] This was the title used by students when addressing their teacher. For example, when al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī speaks of his teacher al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, he says: "our Shaykh Abū ʿAbd Allāh" or "the Shaykh said".[81] In the Jabal ʿĀmil region the title of Shaykh was used for teachers at all levels, both as a form of address and when referring to teachers in biographies. Thus the Shaykh Ḥasan in his *Maʿālim al-dīn* relates "what I was told with the permission of a number of our friends, among them the venerable master, our Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī".[82] Since the title could refer to teachers at any level, a "shaykh" could be both teacher and student at the same time, as well as a jurist and a *mujtahid*.

Teachers' tasks and responsibilities

According to "the second martyr" teachers have a number of tasks and responsibilities, which he formulated in eight points which must be observed in order to succeed in the profession:

1) "A person should not begin teaching before acquiring the proper competence; this should be clearly seen in his demeanor and his language, and confirmed by the more pious of his shaykhs". Confirmation was usually given in the form of a written certificate. A teacher's "demeanor and language" were judged by his students, since there was no professional supervisory body to judge a teacher's qualifications.

2) A teacher should not stoop to teaching undeserving students. Knowledge should be guarded and preserved, and used only for purposes of instruction and not in order to obtain material or political benefits.[83]

3) A teacher should practice what he preaches.

4) A teacher should be modest and of good moral character.

5) A teacher should not refuse to teach anyone whose intentions are not pure; rather, he should accept him and give him proper guidance.

6) A teacher should not withhold any of his knowledge from a deserving student.

7) A teacher should be careful not to have his actions contradict his teachings.

8) A teacher should speak the truth openly, and not withhold it to flatter anyone.[84]

Responsibilities towards students

"The second martyr" gives the following advice to teachers concerning the way to behave towards students.

[80] Al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 1:11.
[81] *Ibid.*, 1:3.
[82] Al-Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn, *Maʿālim al-dīn*, 7.
[83] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 73–79; Shams al-Dīn, *Zayn al-Dīn b. Aḥmad*, 155ff.
[84] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 78.

1) A teacher should instill virtuous habits and piety in his students.

2) A teacher should instill respect for knowledge and its bearers.

3) A teacher should make students love what he loves, and hate the evil which he hates.

4) A teacher should rebuke a student for committing sinful acts or behaving immorally, but by intimation, not accusation.

5) A teacher should accustom his students to be polite to each other and to cooperate in the performance of good deeds.

6) A teacher should be modest and forgiving towards his students, treating them as a father treats his sons. He should know their names, where they come from, and how they are getting along.

7) A teacher should be able to instruct every student in accordance with the latter's mental abilities.

8) A teacher should see to it that students spend their free time going over the lesson; he should show respect towards those who remember their lessons and deal harshly with those who are slack.

9) A teacher should test his students in unusual problems so that they get used to them and keep them in mind.

10) A teacher should treat all his students alike in the classroom, and not show preference towards any.

11) A teacher should not show a liking to one student more than to another.[85]

12) A teacher should ask a student who was absent about his studies and about why he was absent. If a student remains absent, the teacher should send someone to his home or go there himself.

13) A teacher should be forthcoming in his instruction, and not withhold from students knowledge which they may need.

14) A teacher should discourage his students from activities which are not part of his course of study.

15) A teacher should not revile religious topics which he does not teach.

16) A teacher should not molest students who occasionally study with another teacher.

17) A teacher should give public praise to students who finish their course of study.

18) A teacher should commend outstanding students. [86]

[85] *Ibid.*, 79ff.; Shams al-Dīn, *Zayn al-Dīn b. Aḥmad*, 162–173.
[86] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 87.

A teacher's duties when teaching

"The second martyr" has the following to say on a teacher's duties in the classroom:

A teacher should always be careful about his personal appearance and behavior, since personal cleanliness, prayer at the appointed time, greeting those who are present, maintaining a calm and dignified posture, and demonstrating a desire to teach and disseminate the truth, command respect for the teacher and his profession. A teacher should always sit where everyone in the classroom can see and hear him, and refrain from fussing with his hands or his beard. He should neither raise his voice unnecessarily nor lower it so much that some students will not hear. He should be polite and considerate, and start the lessons on time. A teacher must see to it that the classroom is free of anything harmful or bothersome, such as smoke. If a new student comes he should be made to feel welcome. If a teacher is asked a question to which he does not know the answer he should say "I do not know", and if he realizes that he has given a wrong answer he should correct himself before the students leave. At the end of the lesson he should give advice and praise God. He should remain behind for a bit after the students leave, so that anyone with a question can come and ask him. A teacher should appoint one of the students to maintain discipline in the classroom, and another to teach those who are ignorant or want to review the lesson.[87]

The afore-mentioned tasks mentioned by "the second martyr" are general principles which were in force before his days and were also adopted by his successors. They should, however, not be thought of as binding regulations, but rather as advisory precepts.

Note that some of the tasks listed above concern personal aspects of behavior and appearance, whereas others have to do with the way instruction should proceed and how students should be treated. Together they constitute a didactic system used by Shīʿite teachers of religion in the Jabal ʿĀmil region in the period with which the present study deals.

Rules of decorum and behavior for students

"The second martyr" in his *Munyat al-murīd fī ādāb al-mufīd wal-mustafīd* provides some advice to students on how they should behave towards themselves, their teachers and their studies. In what follows we present a short outline of the behavior which "the second martyr" expected of his students.

Students' behavior towards themselves

The advice given to students in this respect can be divided into two: the general attitude one should have when intending to study, and specific advice on how to study.[88]

Before one begins to study, "the second martyr" says, a student should purify his

[87] *Ibid.*, 89ff.

[88] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 101–105; Shams al-Dīn, *Zayn al-Dīn b. Aḥmad*, 186–191.

heart and take advantage of youth's mental abilities and lack of worldly cares. A prospective student should be able to overcome obstacles which fate puts before him, be satisfied with the food and garments with which he is provided, put off marriage until the course of study is completed, stay away from anyone who distracts him from his studies, and use all his time for gaining knowledge.

As for the specific advice on how to study: a student should organize his studies in order of importance, so that the most important things are studied first. Whenever he is immersed in a certain subject he should not leave it for another until he has mastered at least one book, if not more, in it. He should also take care to take what is best from every field of knowledge.

How a student should behave towards his teacher[89]

"The second martyr" lists a number of rules of decorum which students should adopt in their dealings with their teacher. One of the most important preliminary rules is to choose a teacher from whom one can expect to learn proper behavior. Here are some of the other rules:

A student should treat his teacher as if he was his actual as well as his spiritual father. He should show him respect, addressing him with deference and referring to him respectfully in his absence. He should also be patient with his teacher, even if the latter is harsh.

Among the other rules of recommended behavior are the following. A student should made an effort to come to class before the teacher. He should refrain from going to the teacher outside class time without the teacher's permission. He should come to the lesson with an open heart, and not attend the lesson if he his preoccupied with other matters. If he comes to where the teacher should be and he is not there, he should wait for him and not use his absence as an excuse for missing the lesson. A student should sit respectfully before his teacher, pay attention to what he says, speak softly, not interrupt what he says, not ask irrelevant questions, not be ashamed to ask if there is something he does not understand, and not say "I understand" before the matter has become clear to him.

A student's obligations and responsibilities during his studies[90]

Students are expected, according to "the second martyr", to begin their studies by learning the Qurʾān by heart and becoming familiar with Qurʾānic exegesis. A student should study matters which he is capable of understanding. When coming to class he should bring with him the requisite study materials. A student's time should be divided as follows: at dawn he should go over his lesson, since dawn is the best time for memorizing; the daytime is the best time for writing and research; at night he should do his homework.

A student should behave politely towards his comrades. He should not compete

[89] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 106; Shams al-Dīn, *Zayn al-Dīn b. Aḥmad*, 192–197.
[90] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 126–134; Shams al-Dīn, *Zayn al-Dīn b. Aḥmad*, 215–225.

with anyone, nor sit in the middle of the circle, speak during the lesson, or read, unless given permission by the teacher.

These rules of behavior constitute a representative sample typical of the educational approach propounded by "the second martyr". The rules are a mixture of ethical and educational maxims, whose analysis can tell us about students' relations with their comrades and teachers, and the teaching methods used in class. The rules can be viewed as relating to three aspects:

A) The student as an individual – a student must want to learn and prepare himself for becoming a member of a student body seeking religious instruction.

B) Ethical considerations – a student must abide by rules of proper conduct towards his fellow students and his teacher.

C) Academic considerations – the rules of this type concern the way to choose one's teacher, the subjects to be studied and the procedure by which one moves on to more advanced stages of study. The latter is mainly up to his colleagues and teachers, since in the system of study instituted by "the second martyr" there were no examinations, only the tasks given by the teacher, such as going over the lesson.

The financial and social situation of the students

Among Shīʿites, education is not limited by social or financial considerations. Neither the teacher nor the school demands payment, and so anyone who desires to study can do so. In the time and the place dealt with in the present paper, we find students from very different social backgrounds. The reason for attending a school was not monetary need. Since the only material obstacle to finishing one's education was the need to support oneself, "the second martyr" urged his students not to let economic considerations affect their decision to study, and to be satisfied with the means they had.[91]

Still, the fact that one belonged to a family of scholars often helped considerably in easing a student's financial worries. If one's father was also the teacher, obviously a student's financial worries were less. On the other hand, every student received a monthly stipend, in accordance with his academic diligence and attainments, in accordance with the Shīʿite practice of giving support to those engaged in learning and scholarly pursuits.

Some students combined study with work. "The second martyr" himself watched over his orchard at night and worked in commerce in order to support his family.[92] Some students whose families owned land or engaged in trade were supported financially by their parents. Such families often sent one child to study and covered his expenses.

Although students can be said to have come from families with very different financial means, most were quite poor, with no steady source of income. However, what contributed to a certain extent to stability in their material situation was the

[91] "The second martyr", *Munyat al-murīd*, 102.
[92] Al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 7:138.

Shīʿite belief that although in general it was the duty of a person to pursue a livelihood, students of religion would have their economic needs met by Providence. This belief encouraged people to devote themselves to study without worrying about their livelihood. Another article of faith among Shīʿites was that patience was a necessary ingredient in the striving after knowledge; this made students willing to study even under difficult material conditions.

Socially, students were treated with respect, even if they were poor, and especially if they wore religious garb, consisting of a robe (*jilbāb*), a cloak (*ʿabāʾa*) and a turban (*ʿimāma*). Greater respect was accorded to students who could trace their ancestry back to the Prophet. These would be called "Sayyid" and wear a black turban, in contrast to the "Shaykh", who wore a white turban. Students with the title of "Sayyid" were entitled to a "sayyid's share" of the "fifth", equal to half of what people would pay to the Prophet's descendants, as a contribution intended solely for students and scholars.[93]

In learning there was no difference between "Sayyids" and "Shaykhs". In the Jabal ʿĀmil region there arose families of scholars in which a tradition of religious study was passed on from one generation to the next. The male members of such families were all called "Shaykh"; this was the case, for example, with the families of "the first martyr" and "the second martyr".[94]

A perusal of the biographies of students in the Jabal ʿĀmil region included in al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī's *Amal al-āmāl* shows that relatively many belonged to well-known scholarly families. Such students would study, at least initially, with their fathers, and when they grew up and founded families of their own they would teach their own sons in turn.

Further education outside the Jabal ʿĀmil region

Some local students were not content with what the local schools had to offer, and went to Iraq to further their education in the fields of Islamic jurisprudence and tradition. Others went in their quest for a broader horizon to countries such as Iran and India. Quite a few students from Jabal ʿĀmil spent a considerable part of their lives seeking out teachers abroad in order to broaden their religious education.

Among the most popular places sought out by local students were the schools at al-Ḥilla and al-Najaf in Iraq. These were the preferred institutions for advanced studies, and the diplomas awarded by their teachers were much sought after. Thus, for example, both "the first martyr" and "the second martyr" studied at a number of schools in Iraq, as did many others as well. Going to Iraq to further one's studies became a tradition in the Jabal ʿĀmil region, one which is still in force to this day. This is quite a natural development, in view of the fact that the schools in Iraq are older, and their teachers enjoy great prestige. Thus, for example, Shaykh Ḥasan, son of "the second martyr", went to Iraq after finishing his "preliminary" studies in his own country. He took up residence in al-Najaf, where he pursued advanced religious studies.[95]

[93] Muṭahharī, *al-Islām wa-Īrān*, 321.
[94] Al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 7:144.
[95] Al-Ḥasan, son of "the second martyr", *Maʿālim al-dīn*, 6.

Although Iran, too, boasted of good schools, especially in Qumm and Iṣfahān, Jabal ʿĀmil students preferred to study in Iraq. There were a number of reasons for this. First of all, the language of instruction in Iraq was Arabic, so language was not a barrier. Secondly, Najaf was the site of the shrine of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 CE). Thirdly, the *ḥawza* in Najaf had an excellent reputation and offered a rich selection of subjects.

The custom of seeking further education in Iraq began before the period which the present study addresses. The earliest documented case of a student going to Iraq is that of Ismāʿīl b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿŪdī al-Jizzīnī. He went to study in al-Ḥilla, where many subsequent students from Jabal ʿĀmil went as well. Later al-Najaf and other places, outside of Iraq, also became popular. The people of the Jabal ʿĀmil region were in constant contact with the scholars of Iraq, who answered the former's questions on Islamic jurisprudence. Thus, for example, the Shīʿites of Jabal ʿĀmil maintained contact with al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn) (d. 436 AH / 1044 CE), as well as with al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and his student Abū al-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Karājakī (d. 449/1057), who made his home in the city of Sidon.[96]

Among the local Shīʿites who went to Iraq we may mention Shaykh Najam al-Dīn Ṭūmān b. Aḥmad al-Manārī (728/1327) in the middle of the seventh century AH, who was accredited by the scholars of al-Ḥilla, and Shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. Mushrif al-ʿĀmilī, grandfather of "the second martyr", a student of the well-known scholar al-Ḥillī (al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. ʿAlī b. al-Muṭṭahar, 1325 CE). Such study journeys continued into the period covered by the present study. After their period of study abroad, students would return equipped with a solid intellectual and cultural basis that enabled them to teach at home. This process culminated with the journey of "the first martyr" (Muḥammad b. Makkī, 786/1384) who upon his return founded the first religious school in the Jabal ʿĀmil region.

Many students wandered among the various institutions of Shīʿite learning in order to expand their knowledge, and eventually taught in one of the three main centers of Shīʿite education: Jabal ʿĀmil, Iraq and Iran. For example, al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī studied with his father in Jabal ʿĀmil, then moved to Iraq, and later went to Iṣfahān to complete his studies.[97]

Many local students also travelled to Iran, in particular after the founding of the Safavid state there (1501–1722), under whose auspices Shīʿism, pronounced the state religion, became widespread, and Shīʿite religious education flourished. In Safavid Iran, students from the Jabal ʿĀmil region found respite from Ottoman repression. Iran remained popular with local students throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE. The immigrants would take their families with them and send their sons to school in Iran, or teach them at home. For example, Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, d. 1030/1620), who held the post of Shaykh al-Islām in Iran, came there with his father Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (d. 984/1576), who fled from the Turks after the death of "the second martyr".

[96] Makkī, *al-Ḥaraka al-fikriyya wal-adabiyya fī Jabal ʿĀmil*, 25.
[97] Al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 9:59.

In fact, immigrants from Jabal ʿĀmil came to occupy a distinguished position in Safavid Iran. Many attained the post of Shaykh al-Islam, the most prominent being the magistrate al-Karakī (d. 940/1533). They built schools and mosques, and wrote books in Arabic and Persian on religious topics as well as mathematics and astronomy. Another wave of emigration of students from Jabal ʿĀmil to Iran took place after the governor of Sidon, Muḥammad Pasha, known as al-Jazzār, took over the region in 1781,[98] massacred the local inhabitants, imprisoned scholars, and burned their libraries. Subsequently entire families moved to such Iranian cities as Aṣfahān and Qumm, where many remained for generations, thanks to the political and military stability in Iran.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century some students from the Jabal ʿĀmil region journeyed as far as India and the city of Hyderabad. Among them were Jamāl al-Dīn b. ʿAlī al-Ḥusaynī al-Jabʿī (d. 1687 CE), who attained a prominent position in Hyderabad,[99] and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Niʿmat Allāh al-ʿĀmilī, also known as Ibn Khātūn (d. after 1589), who journeyed to Iran and India, eventually settling in Hyderabad, where he rose, in the reign of the sultan ʿAbd Allāh, to the position of Grand Vizier and mediator between the sultan and the Shah of Iran.

Our inquiry into the lives of teachers and students can provide a glimpse into the character of the educational system in the Jabal ʿĀmil region during the period with which the present paper deals. Among the characteristics of this system we may mention the lack of a specific age at which one became a student, and also an indifference to material matters, since teaching and learning were considered religious duties. Islamic jurisprudence formed the basis of learning. Both teachers and students were required to possess certain specific virtues.

An interesting aspect of the educational system under consideration is its voluntary character. Students were limited to a specific curriculum and could choose their teachers; teachers could choose their own curriculum and textbooks, and could also accept or reject students as they chose.

The voluntary nature of education did not depend on the type of institution. It was as true of study groups in teachers' homes as well as of schools. In all cases the teacher was the main focus of educational activity, and students could change teachers and even schools without any problem.

It is worth noting, too, that relations between teacher and students did not have a financial or economic dimension, since students did not pay their teachers, who considered their teaching duties the fulfillment of a religious commandment.

Conclusion

We have seen that the Shīʿites of the Jabal ʿĀmil region developed a system of religious education in the period with which the present study deals. This system took into consideration the needs and possibilities of their surroundings, but was also in-

[98] For more information on al-Jazzār's occupation of Jabal ʿĀmil see: Gharīb, *Naḥwa tārīkh fikrī-siyāsī li-shīʿat Lubnān*, 1:192; Suwayd, *al-Tārīkh al-ʿaskarī lil-muqāṭaʿāt al-lubnāniyya fī ʿahd al-imāratayni*, 2: 512–518; Āl Ṣafā, *Tārīkh Jabal ʿĀmil*, 136.

[99] Al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 8:130.

fluenced by inherited Shīʿite educational habits brought in from outside, especially from Iraq.

Shīʿite education in the region was in the main of a voluntary and individual nature, rather than possessing an institutional character. It was based mainly on the desire of the student to learn, and on the student-teacher relationship. The Shīʿite scholars in the region did make efforts to set up a system of schools whose educational activities would be continuous and uninterrupted, but in fact schools remained dependent on their founders' presence and financial support, and were unable to impose an abiding system of rules which students and teachers would obey.

Education was thus constrained by individual voluntary relations between students and their teacher. Students could freely choose their teachers, and teachers were not compelled to accept a student they did not want. The student-teacher relationship was thus based on mutual liking and trust, in addition to religious requirements concerning ethical aspects of the relationship.

The local populace of the Jabal ʿĀmil region made an effort to provide the necessary material support for education in the form of the "fifth" and other charitable contributions. It also provided an appropriate atmosphere for scholars and students by giving them the social status they deserved. Due to the great respect accorded to religious scholars, families of scholars became a focus of social polarization.

Scholars' and students' social status was not associated with financial or political power, for in the Jabal ʿĀmil region learning meant becoming well-acquainted with Shīʿite religious sciences in a society ridden with poverty, due to its political and geographical circumstances. These circumstances gave rise to a number of pressing educational goals. The most important of these was the establishment and dissemination of the Shīʿite creed by means of schools and other places of learning. For that reason local scholars made an effort to establish schools where local and foreign students could receive an education. Eventually political pressures put an end to these efforts and forced local students to emigrate and study in far-away places such as Iran, where they continued the work of disseminating the Shīʿite faith.

We also saw that the doctrines of Twelver Shīʿism constituted the foundation of education in the Jabal ʿĀmil region, in line with the beliefs of the local populace. Although "the second martyr" wanted to expand the spectrum of subjects taught in the local schools and include such subjects as mathematics, astronomy and medicine, which he believed were socially useful, the social and political conditions in the region during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods made it impossible to offer such subjects, which require encouragement and support from the state. Unfortunately the state in this case focused its attention on other groups, whose members belonged to the official state religion.

Although, as we saw, the main focus of study was religious, the study materials themselves were divided into numerous separate disciplines, such as jurisprudence, tradition, doctrine and language. In each of these specialized subjects important books were written, in particular by "the first martyr" and "the second martyr", the two most prominent educational figures in the period under discussion. In fact, some of their books are still used in Shīʿite *ḥawza*s to this day.

Schools, we saw, played an important part in the educational system of the Jabal ʿĀmil region. These were boarding schools, where local and foreign students lived and learned. The schools provided a stable learning environment in which students and teachers were in constant contact, to their mutual benefit. The founder of a school would usually concentrate on carrying out the various stages of education, at the expense of developing new subjects. This had the effect of impeding the progress of curriculum development. The geographical isolation of the schools, established in the wild mountainous areas of Jabal ʿĀmil, contributed to this as well, but also provided a modicum of security. Another result of this isolation was a focus on jurisprudence and on repetition, which was considered an appropriate way to preserve the Shīʿite heritage and identity. As we saw, in recent generations religious scholars have attempted to introduce new subjects into the curriculum to make it more appropriate to modern needs, without ignoring more traditional subjects. This gave rise to some new textbooks and some changes in the curriculum.

In conclusion we may say that in the period in question the Shīʿites in the Jabal ʿĀmil region succeeded in establishing an educational system which helped bring about a cultural revival under very difficult political and economic circumstances. This revival resulted in the dissemination of Shīʿite culture and thought, and enriched Shīʿite literature with original works on jurisprudence, doctrine and language, some of which are still being used today in religious instruction.

The system of religious instruction considered here was appropriate for its time and place. It achieved its goal of preserving the Shīʿite heritage and disseminating it among the adherents of Shīʿism. This does not mean, of course, that it is still appropriate today; certainly Shīʿite scholars and intellectuals have a duty to develop a new curriculum more in keeping with modern times and modern educational goals.

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Ḥawza Instruction and Its Role in Shaping Modern Shī'ite Identity: The *Ḥawza*s of al-Najaf and Qumm as a Case Study

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The present study is an inquiry into present-day Twelver Shī'ite (Imāmiyya) religious instruction given in Shī'ite *ḥawza*s, specifically the *ḥawza* in al-Najaf, Iraq and the one in Qumm, Iran, for the purpose of examining how this instruction has contributed to shaping Shī'ite identity. The study will also discuss the historical circumstances which brought about the establishment of *ḥawza*s, how one joins, where instruction takes place, teaching methods, study hours, the language of instruction, official breaks and vacations, financing, stages of study and the curriculum at each stage, the system of examinations, wearing the turban, diplomas, tasks which graduates are expected to perform, student–teacher relations, and also the political role played by the *ḥawza*s.

A number of studies in both East and West have dealt with several aspects of *ḥawza* instruction. However, none, as far as I am aware, has attempted a comprehensive treatment of the role which this type of religious education plays in shaping Shī'ite identity, as the present study proposes to do. The following are the most significant studies on the subject which have appeared to date.

A. History of the *ḥawza*s and the structure of education in them. Two books exist on this subject. Muḥammad al-Gharawī's *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf al-ashraf* (*The Ḥawza in Najaf*) (Dār al-aḍwā', Beirut, 1994) is a historical study about the beginnings of religious instruction in al-Najaf, the curriculum, dormitory schools, the teaching system and the like.

   The second, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣāliḥī's *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya* (*The Ḥawzas in the Lands of Islam*) (Bayt al-'ilm lil-nābihīn, Beirut, 2004), in addition to providing a history of the *ḥawza* as an institution, with particular emphasis on the one in al-Najaf, deals with numerous aspects of instruction and gives some details about the most important *ḥawza*s throughout the Shī'ite world, including an exhaustive chapter about the *ḥawza zaynabiyya* in Damascus. The book ends with some information about secondary *ḥawza*s.

B. The role played by Shī'ite clerics and how they are trained. On this subject we have Meir Litvac's comprehensive *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*

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(Cambridge University Press, 1998), dealing mainly with Shīʿite clerics in the two cities of al-Najaf and Karbalā', the social and political climate among them, methods of religious instruction and how it was financed, and also the role the clerics played in leading the Shīʿite community and standing up to the Sunnī rulers of Baghdad.

Another work, this time in Arabic, is Ḥusayn Baraka al-Shāmī's *al-Marjaʿiyya al-dīniyya min al-dhāt ilā al-muʾassasa* (*Religious Authority from Self to Institution*) (Dār al-islām, London, 1999), which describes the role of clerics ('religious authority') in the life of the Shīʿite community, using the cleric Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh as an example.

Recently the Beirut-based 'Maʿhad al-rasūl al-akram al-ʿālī lil-sharīʿa wal-dirāsāt al-islāmiyya' (The Most Honourable Messenger Higher Institute for Sharīʿa and Islamic Studies) published a study entitled *al-Ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya fī fikr al-imām al-Khāminaʾī* (*The Ḥawza in the Thought of the Imam al-Khāminaʾī*) (2002), compiled by the 'Markaz al-takhṭīṭ wal-manāhij al-dirāsiyya' (The Centre for Planning and Curricula). The book presents the views of al-Khāminaʾī as to the educational philosophy needed in *ḥawza* instruction in our day and age, including certain reforms which he believes are necessary.

C. History of Shīʿite religious instruction. On this topic two relevant studies were published by Jawdat al-Qazwīnī in 2005. In the first, *al-Muʾassasa al-dīniyya al-shīʿiyya min al-ʿaṣr al-buwayhī ilā nihāyat al-ʿaṣr al-ṣafawī al-awwal 912–1592* (*The Shīʿite Religious Establishment from the Buwayhid Period until the End of the First Safavid Period, 912–1592 CE*), the author provides a historical survey of the history of religious instruction among Shīʿites and the obstacles it faced, from the 'major occultation' until the end of the sixteenth century CE, in the schools of al-Ḥīla, Jabal ʿĀmil, Bahrain and in the Safavid state.

The second work, *al-Marjaʿiyya al-dīniyya al-ʿulyā ʿind al-shīʿa al-imāmiyya* (*Religious Authority in Twelver Shīʿism*), contains a history of Shīʿite religious rulings and the role which Shīʿite jurists played in Iraq and Iran from the Buwayhid period to modern times.

According to Twelver Shīʿite belief, after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (632 CE), leadership of the community rightfully belonged to the twelve Imāms, who directed the community as a whole and also solved problems faced by individual members. This was the case from the first Imām, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661) until the disappearance of the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. al-Ḥasan (873), which marked the beginning of the 'minor occultation'.[1] During this period of absence the Imām is said to have maintained contact with his community indirectly, by means of four successive lieutenants whom he appointed to mediate between himself and the faithful. These four, known among Shīʿites as the 'four ambassadors', were: ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-ʿAmrī or al-ʿUmayrī (d. 874–875 CE), Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-ʿAmrī, son of the preceding (d. 304 AH/916-917 CE), al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī (d. 326/938) and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Samarī (d. 328/940). With the death of the last 'ambassador', the 'minor occultation' came to an end,[2] and the 'major occultation' began. According to Shīʿite belief this occultation, which continues to the present day, will end with the reappearance of the Mahdī, the twelfth Imām, who will replace the current oppression with justice.[3]

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Shīʿites followed in their Imāms' footsteps until the Safavids[4] (1501–1736) came to power in Iran. In the year 1551 the Safavid Shāh Ismāʿīl proclaimed Twelver Shīʿism as the official religion of the kingdom.[5] This marked the beginning of a concerted effort by the rulers to impose the Shīʿite belief throughout Iran. Their capital city Tabrīz and other important towns such as Iṣfahān, Qumm and Mashhad became important centres of Shīʿite learning, whose scholars were in demand everywhere.

During the Safavid period relations between the Shīʿite clergy and the authorities were good.[6] The Shāh's rule had religious sanction and was considered God's shadow on earth, while the clerics fulfilled important governmental functions.

At the end of the eighteenth century CE the Safavids were overthrown by the Qajar dynasty[7] (ruled 1796–1925). This gave rise to an internal conflict within the Shīʿite camp concerning the proper way to address the everyday problems which the faithful faced in those unsettled times. Two schools emerged, the *ikhbāriyya*,[8] according to which the Qur'ān together with the usages sanctions by the Imāms were sufficient to solve any problems which the faithful might have, with the help of the clerics, of course; and the second school, the *uṣūliyya*, which maintained that major problems could only be solved by the greatest religious authority of the day, a man who could be trusted to use his own independent judgement (*ijtihād*) appropriately. Every generation had its own supreme legist or *mujtahid*. Already the Safavids encouraged the appeal to the 'absolute independent judgement' (*al-ijtihād al-muṭlaq*) of the *mujtahid* known as al-Muqaddas al-Ardibīlī (d. 1585). At that time a campaign began which called for venerating leading clerics and emulating them, since they were the 'sources of thought' (*marājiʿ al-fikr*) and possessors of the right to use the tool of independent judgement (*ijtihād*). The name *uṣūliyya* given to this school is derived from its belief in the main principles (*uṣūl*) of Islamic jurisprudence used for the derivation of legal rulings using *ijtihād*.

The *uṣūliyya* school was strongly opposed by its rival, the *akhbariyya*,[9] but eventually triumphed over it. This victory contributed to the rise of the principle of emulation (*taqlīd*), which requires every follower of Twelver Shīʿism to choose a cleric whom he emulates, whose advice he seeks, and who serves as a link between the believer and the twelfth Imām, the 'concealed' Mahdī.[10]

In consequence the Shīʿite community was divided into two classes, one consisting of *mujtahid*s to be emulated (*muqallad*), and the other of those who follow and emulate (*muqallid*) the former and whose advice they seek on religious and other matters. The need thus arose for training a cadre of clerics whose judgements would be authoritative (*mujtahid muqallad*),[11] and who would lead the Shīʿite community and give it instruction. The principle of emulation served to strengthen the ties between the faithful and their religious leadership. A modern scholar has rightly pointed out that the victory of the *uṣūliyya* and its success in promoting the status of its *mujtahidīn* has given Shīʿite clerics an authority which greatly exceeds that of any of their Sunnī counterparts, and which gives their rulings a greater legitimacy among the faithful than the civil laws passed by the state.[12]

The institution entrusted to train the needed *mujtahidīn* was the *ḥawza* (full term: *al-ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya*), a word derived from the root Ḥ.W.Z, meaning to obtain or possess. The verbal noun *ḥawz* in its substantive use means an enclosed area. *Ḥawza* therefore means an enclosure or precinct.[13]

The full term used by Shī'ites is *al-ḥawza al-'ilmiyya* ('enclosure of learning'). In modern usage it refers to an institution of Shī'ite religious learning in which the curriculum is based on the principle of independent judgement (*ijtihād*).[14] Although the full term for the institution is *al-ḥawza al-'ilmiyya*, it is commonly denoted by the word *ḥawza* alone, devoid of attributes. Most *ḥawza*s are located next to the tombs of Imāms or other great clerics.[15] The reason for this lies in the fact that Shī'ite pilgrims give endowments to these shrines, and the funds thus made available benefit all the adjoining institutions. This provides the *ḥawza* with a means of support, enables pilgrims to seek the advice of the students and teachers there, and frees the latter to pursue religious learning.[16]

*Ḥawza*s do not require candidates to pass admission tests, nor are there examinations to determine a potential student's academic skills. What is required is basic literacy, although preference is given to those in possession of a better-than-average high school diploma. In addition, the candidate must provide at least two character references.[17] Foreign students are accepted only if a religious position is waiting for them in their country of origin after graduation.[18]

In general, instruction takes place within the *ḥawza* itself, in the teacher's room, in his home, or in a classroom. The class may even meet inside the adjoining shrine, in the case of al-Najaf, Karbala', Qumm and the like, on the roof during the hot summers, in underground vaults or in a local mosque. In the initial stages of study classes or study circles are in general quite crowded, whereas more advanced classes take place in quieter surroundings.[19]

The methods of instruction in a *ḥawza* differ from those encountered in more traditional institutions of learning.[20] Teaching is not organized around a class, but around the individual student. Students sit on the ground and discuss the subject matter in pairs or in circles. 'Discussion' (*mubāḥatha*) consists of a debate among two or three students, as each in turn interprets the lesson. One characteristic aspect of *ḥawza* instruction is that a student may at the same time also act as teacher to less advanced students.[21] Students may choose which book to study, from among those deemed appropriate to his current state of knowledge; they also choose their teachers, and even the time and place of study, in agreement with the teacher.

The instruction proceeds as follows. The teacher reads from his book, and then explains the text he has read. Then he reads the opinions of others on the matter at hand and explains the rhetorical issues raised by the text. This is the preliminary stage, in which external aspects are discussed. At a more advanced level (*al-baḥth al-khārij*, literally 'outside research') the teacher will choose a text from a book on Islamic jurisprudence, to which he will add relevant traditions, and occasionally also mention the views of the four orthodox schools of jurisprudence, the Ḥanafī, the Ḥanbalī, the Shāfi'ī and the Mālikī. He will then explain why the Shī'ite view is the correct one, adducing arguments both for and against, and finally present the result of the inquiry, including proof.[22] Since the teacher in the 'outside research' stage does not use a textbook but relies on his own memory instead, most students will peruse the sources which the teacher mentions during the lesson.

Among Shī'ite clerics there are those who are in favour of this system of study, where the student can choose his teacher and the study material, since the result is a more knowledgeable and gifted graduate. Others, however, believe that this method is too time-consuming, forcing some students to leave before completing their

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studies, and should therefore be amended, and the texts should be simplified.[23] However, such differences of opinion notwithstanding, the traditional *ḥawza* system of instruction has so far resisted change.

Shīʿite sources use terminology dating to the classical period for describing the relations between students and teachers in the *ḥawza*, for example the verb *lāzama* ('adhered to . . . [a teacher]). This usage serves to stress their view that the system of instruction is a direct continuation of the one used in classical times.[24]

Some *mujtahidīn* conducted what are known as 'study circles' (*ḥalaqāt dirāsiyya*) at various levels. One very famous example of this is the family of Kāshif al-Ghatā', a prominent Arab family from al-Najaf, who provided many students and teachers for such circles.

Each such circle is usually divided into two parts. One is a smaller inner circle of older students with whom the teacher is more intimately acquainted, called *khawāṣṣ* (exclusive members). They help the teacher perform his duties at the school, and also provide personal assistance. The second, outer circle is larger, and contains the majority of the students.

There is no formal procedure for becoming a member of the *khawāṣṣ*; joining the inner circle usually follows some years of proven merit as a student and of loyal service to one's teachers.[25] Where a student sits within the circle, how near or far from the teacher in the classroom, reflects his status and the number of years he has studied. Some *mujtahid* teachers maintain special study circles for their most promising students. A student may study with a number of *mujtahidīn* at the same time, but he will always be considered the student of one particular senior teacher.

In the first years of study there are often many students of a particular nationality at a certain *ḥawza*. These will tend to prefer studying with a teacher of the same nationality. This is most particularly the case with Iranian students at the Iraqi *ḥawza*s of al-Najaf and Karbalā', but also Arab students at the *Ḥawza* of Qumm will tend to prefer Arab teachers. However, prominent *mujtahidīn* will usually attract students from all nationalities.[26]

The subject of 'principles of jurisprudence' (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), in which independent thought and logical analysis play an important role, encourages students to ask questions and to challenge their teachers' opinions. Such 'dissents' (*ʿirāḍāt*) are acceptable as long as students do not violate the ethical code by calling into question the teacher's authority, the truth of his statements or principles of the faith.

Thus, for example, it is related of Murtaḍa al-Anṣārī (d. 1845 CE), considered one of the outstanding teachers at the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf, that he would pay careful attention to what his students said to him, for he had learned from experience that students of his were capable of refuting his juridical opinions. In spite of such cases, however, in fact the usual intellectual climate at *ḥawza*s is such that students are not encouraged to think for themselves; teachers are often angry with students who dare question them too pointedly.[27]

Ḥawza students often compose juridical works under their teacher's guidance; their work consists of transcribing the teacher's writings or compiling his religious rulings (*fatwa*). A collection of a teacher's rulings constitutes a 'scientific thesis' (*risāla ʿilmiyya*), and is published for the purpose of promoting the teacher's career as a religious leader.[28]

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The art of debate is an important way for students to demonstrate their acuity and catch the attention of their teacher. In special cases a student may represent his teacher in a debate with another *mujtahid*. The most famous example for this is perhaps the case of Mahdī Kajūrī, who was called on to debate Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Iṣfahānī in the name of his teacher Ibrāhīm Qazwīnī.[29]

The lack of textbooks, because for a long time there were no printing presses in Iraq and Iran, forced every *mujtahid* to appoint one of his students to write down his lectures ('recorder', *muqarrir*). These students were not necessarily the brightest. Occasionally these 'recorders' would repeat the teacher's lecture to the students after the lecture ended. The lectures would eventually be published under the teacher's name, or sometimes that of the recorder, if his contribution was deemed to have warranted this.

Two famous cases are those of the *mujtahid*s Ibrāhīm Qazwīnī (d. 1845 CE) and Ḥasan al-Māmaqānī (d. 1905 CE), both of whom became quite famous for the books they published in which they recorded the lectures of their respective teachers. The distinguished scholar al-Māzandarānī (d. 1831 CE) was displeased at his student Ibrāhīm Qazwīnī's publication, Ḥusayn Kūhkamarā'ī (d. 1881–1882 CE) praised his student al-Māmqānī's books, which he even recommended to his own students. Beyond the ethics of the matter, the identity of the real author of a book played an important role in determining the status of clerics and in their struggles for leadership. The importance attached to a cleric's teaching abilities and religious publications at times created tension between teachers and students. The habit of publication described above went back to the tenth century CE, and remained in force until the twentieth century. Thus, for example, Ayatullah Khumaini's first publication, *Wilāyat al-faqīh* (*A Jurist's Mandate: Government of the Religious Class under the Authority of a Supreme Religious Authority*), at the beginning of the 1970s, consisted of his recorded lectures at the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf.

There are no specific times for learning at the *ḥawza*. At the beginning stages of study students and teacher can decide together on the hours. They might meet after the morning prayer, after sunrise or sunset, or any other time. Therefore, in any *ḥawza*, whether in Iran or in Iraq, one may see study circles in session throughout the day. Lessons for advanced students ('outside research') are held at various times, in the morning, the afternoon and the evening, at least at the large *ḥawza*s such as those at Karbalā', Qumm and al-Najaf, in order to enable students to attend more than one. A lesson, whether for beginners or for advanced students, lasts between an hour and an hour-and-a-half.[30]

At the advanced level the language of instruction is the student's native language. Thus an Arab student will choose an Arab tutor, a Turkish student a Turkish tutor, and so on. At the preliminary level lessons are either in Arabic or in Persian,[31] because most students belong to one of these two nationalities. Textbooks at all but the most advanced levels can be found in these two languages as well. As for courses at the 'outside research' level (the highest stage of learning), *al-baḥth al-khārij or al-dars al-kharij*, they are held in Arabic in the Arab countries. In Iran lessons are in Persian, as are all study materials.[32]

Students live in dormitories called 'schools' (*madāris*).[33] These have names, usually that of the donor. The dormitories consist of buildings with small rooms for unmarried students.[34] Each room can accommodate two or three students. Married

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students live outside the dormitories in homes of their own.[35] In the dormitories one can find Afghans, Pakistanis, Iranians and Arabs of all nationalities, young students and old, men and women,[36] all gathered for the purpose of studying the Shīʿite religion. All these students live together in the 'schools' and despite their various nationalities and languages they are united by their Shīʿite identity and their desire for Shīʿite knowledge.[37]

Ḥawza students do not pay a tuition fee. Indeed, they receive grants from their teachers. The poorer students depend on these grants for their living, especially in cases where they get no support from the school's endowment fund. This can bring about a considerable dependence of the student on his teacher. It is related, for example, that Mīrzā Ḥasan Shīrāzī (d. 1896 CE) decided himself how much each student would receive, for the purpose of increasing the competition among them. In his memoirs Ḥasan Quchani recalls his studies at the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf. He tells that he was forced to ask a student from Khurasān to intercede on his behalf with his Khurasānī teacher, Muḥammad Kāzim 'Ākhūnd' Khurasānī (d. 1911 CE) in order to obtain a grant.[38]

All *ḥawza*s have nearly the same official vacations, with some differences due to regional and local factors. They are as follows:[39]

A. Every Thursday and Friday. This gives the students a chance to review the lessons they had during the preceding week, and also to take care of personal business.
B. The first two weeks of the month of *muḥarram* and the last two weeks of the month of *ṣafar*. These holidays enable the student to take part in the mourning ceremonies on the day of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī's death (the day of *'Āshūrā'*, on the tenth of *muḥarram*), and on the fortieth day after his death (on the twentieth of *ṣafar*).[40] Many students travel to various Muslim countries for these holidays, in order to provide guidance and recite the story of Ḥusayn's martyrdom.
C. The month of *ramaḍān*. During this month some students go to villages and towns in their own countries, or to the West, in order to preach. Others remain in the *ḥawza*s and study Qur'ān exegesis and ethics.
D. The anniversaries of the deaths of the Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve Imāms.
E. The following holidays: 'Id al-fiṭr, 'Id al-aḍḥā, al-Ghadīr, the Persian New Year, the Prophet's birthday and the Day of Revelation, and the birthday of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.
F. The anniversary of the death of the various prominent Shīʿite 'sources of emulation' (*marāji' al-taqlīd*). Depending on the revered cleric's standing, his death may be commemorated for a period of between one and six days. These commemorations are accompanied by sessions of mourning and of reading the first chapter of the Qur'ān (*al-Fātiḥa*).
G. A 45-day summer vacation. This is an innovation which was promulgated 20 years ago by the 'great source of emulation' al-Khū'ī.[41] As a result, some of the other vacations were reduced.

Note that a considerable part of the vacations at a *ḥawza* fall on specifically Shīʿite occasions: The birth and death dates of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima and the

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twelve Imāms, al-Gadīr,[42] the Persian New Year,[43] and the fortieth day after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī (680 CE). The cessation of study at the *ḥawza* on these specifically Shīʻite occasions contribute to the *ḥawza* teachers' emotional and religious campaign aimed at bolstering Shīʻite spirit and morale among students and at creating a single unified body of all those at the *ḥawza*, possessing a strong Shīʻite identity. This is for the students remaining at the *ḥawza*. However, many students leave for the holidays in order to engage in propaganda and cultural activities, inside the countries where they are located and also abroad.

A significant feature of *ḥawza*s is their financial independence from state institutions.[44] *Ḥawza*s refuse funds originating in the state, the government or a ruler; nor do they take ruling ideologies or systems of government into consideration. Khamīna'ī discussed the various reasons why *ḥawza*s have been, and must remain, independent, among which he lists the following:

A. The fate of a *ḥawza* should never be tied to that of a government.
B. A *ḥawza* run by or associated with the state cannot fulfil its mission, since the state is sure to impose its will on it.
C. Unlike the state, *ḥawza*s as an institution have roots that go back for more than a millennium, and should therefore never be tied to any other institution. Otherwise their independence will be in danger.
D. *Ḥawza*s should be financially and administratively independent.

A *ḥawza*'s expenses consist of the costs of building and maintaining dormitories, students' grants and teachers' salaries (instituted in the tenth century AH), and the publication and acquisition of books. A number of financial sources are available to *ḥawza*s for meeting these expenses:

A. Pledges and vows in return for recovery from sickness or deliverance from danger, endowments, charity payments and contributions by rulers and members of the Shīʻite community.[45]
B. 'The fifth' *khums*,[46] a tax paid by Shīʻites on their annual income to their 'sources of emulation' and *mujtahidūn*, in accordance with a legal ruling based on the following Qur'ānic verse: 'And know that whatever of war-booty that you may gain, verily one-fifth of it is assigned to Allâh, and to the Messenger, and to the near relatives, the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer'.[47] The fifth includes also the share belonging to the occulted twelfth Imām (*sahm-i Imām*), and it is from this share that the *ḥawza*s are financed. The fact that Shīʻite *mujtahidūn* are paid by contributions from members of the Shīʻite community makes them more committed to the latter and ensures their independence from the authorities.
C. 'Restitution for wrongs', a sum of money imposed for a wrong supposedly committed.
D. One-third (*thulth*) of the 'right of inheritance' (*haqq al-waṣiyya*) from the estate of the deceased[48] persons, and was usually designated for a certain religious purpose with the mujtahid acting as a trustee.
E. Income from Shīʻite endowments in Iraq, Iran, India and other countries with a Shīʻite population.

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F. 'Oudh bequest':[49] this is a very large endowment whose income is sent to the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf and to the shrines of the Shī'ite Imāms from the Shī'ite state of Oudh in northern India.[50]

Ḥawza studies are divided into three stages,[51] as follows. The first stage is preliminaries (al-muqaddamāt)[52] Studies at this stage are usually of an individual nature, although occasionally more than one student takes part, the students making up a small circle.[53] The teacher at this stage is a more advanced student. This stage may last between three and five years, depending on the student's aptitude. The subjects taught at this stage are morphology, syntax, rhetoric, basic concepts of logic, as well as Arabic language and literature. Optional subjects include mathematics and astronomy. At this stage the student learns from certain textbooks, and only rarely goes beyond them. These textbooks are the following:

- *Al-Ujrūmiyya*, by 'Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Aḥmad b. Hishām, known as Ibn Ājarūm (d. 1359 CE), is a small book which presents the rules of syntax.
- *Qaṭr al-nadā wa-ball al-ṣadā*, by the same 'Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Aḥmad b. Hishām, is a collection of parables in common use among Arabs as examples for the rules of grammar.
- *Sharḥ Ibn 'Aqīl* (*Ibn 'Aqīl's Commentary*) is a commentary on the 1,000-verse poem in *rajaz* metre known as *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* (*Ibn Malik's Thousand Lines*) by 'Abd Allah Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mālik al-Ṭā'ī (d. 1251 CE) which presents the rules of Arabic grammar in verse.
- *Mukhtaṣar al-ma'ānī* (*Abstract of Rhetoric*), by Mas'ūd b. 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1388 CE), provides a summary and explanation of two books, *Miftāh al-'ulūm fī l-bayān wal-ma'ānī wal-badī'* (*The Key to the Sciences of Rhetoric and Style*) by Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. Abī Bakr al-Sakākī (d. 1229 CE) and *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm* (*Key to the Sciences*) by the preacher Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Umar al-Qazwīnī (d. 1318 CE).

Non-Arab students (Iranians, Pakistanis, Indians, Turks) begin their studies with a textbook called *Jāmi' 'al-muqaddimāt* (*Compendium of Preliminaries*), a volume containing a number of compositions, as follows:

- *Al-Amthila* (*Paradigms*), a very small booklet in Persian about Arabic morphology by al-Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī.
- *Sharḥ amthila* (*Commentary on 'Paradigms'*), a commentary on the previous book, by Mīrzā Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Tankābinī (d. 1888 CE).
- *Ṣarf mīr* (*Mīr's Morphology*), a book in Persian on Arabic morphology by Mīr Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816 AH/1395 CE).
- *Al-Taṣrīf* (*Morphology*), an Arabic book on the rules of Arabic morphology, similar to the previous book, by 'Izz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Zinjānī (d. 1257 CE).
- *Sharḥ al-taṣrīf* (*Commentary on 'Morphology'*), a commentary on the previous work, by Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Taftāzānī (d. 1388 CE).
- *'Awāmil Mulla Muḥsin* (*Mulla Muḥsin's Syntax*), a concise book on syntax by Mulla Muḥsin b. Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir al-Qazwīnī (d. 1128 AH/1715 CE).

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- *'Awāmil al-naḥw* (*Rules of Syntax*) is another concise book on syntax, by Mīrzā Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Tankābinī.
- *Al-Hidāya* (*Guidance*), a short Arabic syntax by Abū Hayyān al-Andalusī Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, attributed also to al-Zubayr al-Baṣrī b. Aḥmad al-Shāfi'ī, 'Abd al-Jalīl b. Fayrūz al-Qazwīnī, and Ibn Durustawayh 'Abd Allāh b. Ja'far.
- *Sharḥ Unmūdhaj* (*Commentary on the Model*), a book containing texts by al-Zamakhsharī, with an explanation by 'Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Ardibīlī.
- *Al-Fawā'id al-ṣamadiyya* (*Ṣamad's Benefits*), *al-Ṣamadiyya* for short, contains five 'gardens' (*Ḥadā'iq*) set out by Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Ḥārithī, known also as Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī (d. 1621 CE). He wrote this book for his nephew 'Abd al-Ṣamad, with a model essay by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143 CE) and an explanation from the above-mentioned *Sharḥ Unmūdhaj*.
- *Al-Bahja al-murḍiya* (*Gratifying Splendour*), a commentary on *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jalāl al-Dīn b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūtī (d. 1505 CE).
- *Mughnī al-labīb* (*Satisfier of the Understanding*), a book of Arabic grammar by Ibn Hishām (d. 1359 CE). Of its eight chapters *Ḥawza* students are required to study the first, 'The words of the Arabic Language', and parts of the second and fourth, 'The state of clauses in which desinential inflection plays no part' and 'Clauses in which desinential inflection plays a part', respectively.
- *Al-Muṭawwal* (*The Elaboration*), a commentary on al-Sakākī's *Talkhīṣ miftāḥ al-'ulūm* (*Abstract of the 'Key to the Sciences'*), by Mas'ūd b. 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī.

In addition to *Jāmi 'al-muqaddimāt* the following grammar books are also in use:

- On morphology: *Sharḥ al-niẓām* (*Commentary on Niẓām*), which contains *Kitāb al-Shāfiya* (*Book of Clear Answers*) by Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 1248 CE); a commentary on *Kitāb al-Shāfiya* by Niẓām al-Dīn al-A'raj al-Nīshābūrī; and another commentary on it by Riḍā al-Dīn al-Astar'ābādī, known as *Sharḥ al-Riḍā* (*Ridā's Commentary*).
- On syntax: *Kitāb al-kāfiya* (*Book of Adequate Explanation*) by Ibn al-Ḥājib; a commentary on it by Riḍā al-Dīn al-Astar'ābādī, written in 1284 CE; the aforementioned *Sharḥ al-jāmī*; al-Suyūtī's commentary entitled *al-Bahja al-murḍiya* (*Gratifying Splendour*); and Ibn Hishām's *Kitāb tadhkirat mughnī al-labīb*.

In addition to the abovementioned books students at the preliminary stage, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, all learn from the following three books:

- *Al-Risāla al-'amaliyya fī al-fiqh* (*A Practical Treatise on Jurisprudence*), a primer on Islamic jurisprudence written by the particular 'source of emulation' of the student in question.
- *Ḥāshiat Mullā 'Abd Allāh* (*Mullā 'Abd Allāh's Notes*), a commentary on *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq wal-kalām* (*Instruction on Logic and Debate*) by Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1371 CE) by Najam al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh b. Shihāb al-Dīn Ḥusayn al-Yazdī (d. 1573 CE).

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- *Manṭiq al-Muẓaffar* (*Muẓaffar's Logic*) by Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar (d. 1970 CE). The book consists of three parts: Part one: Terminology, the Universal, the Specific; Part two: Propositions and their Rules; Part three: The Five Crafts.

The second stage is divided into two parts: The 'surfaces of jurisprudence' (*suṭūḥ al-fiqh*) and the 'upper surfaces' (*al-suṭūḥ al-'ulyā*). At this stage the subjects include jurisprudence, introductory philosophy, astronomy, Qur'ān exegesis, among others.

The stage can last between four and five years. Generally the study is done individually, or at times in a small circle.[54] Students can choose the lessons they attend, and even the textbooks they use. They are not supervised, but are expected to show self-discipline. At this stage, as in the following two, students enjoy the right to criticize their teachers and to debate with them. The extent of this right depends on the student's abilities. Its purpose is to hone the student's powers of observation.[55]

The following books on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) are studied at this stage by all students, whether Arab or not.

- *Al-Rawḍa al-bahiyya fī sharḥ al-lum'a al-dimashqiyya* (*The Magnificent Garden, A Commentary on the Radiance of Damascus*) by Muḥammad b. Jamāl al-Dīn Makkī al-'Āmilī, also known as 'the first martyr' (*al-shahīd al-awwal*) (1333–1384 CE). The book also contains a commentary by Zayn al-Dīn al-Jab'ī al-'Āmilī, also known as 'the second martyr' (*al-shahīd al-thānī*) (1505–1558 CE). This is an important book which treats all aspects of jurisprudence; students at the *ḥawza* are required to read it as a prerequisite for advanced studies in jurisprudence.
- *Al-Makāsib* (*Profits*) by Murtaḍā b. Muḥammad b. Amīn al-Tusturī al-Ansārī (1799–1864 CE). The book presents topics in commercial law in the spirit of independent judgement (*ijtihād*). Students who assimilate this material well can attain the level of *mujtahid*.
- *Uṣūl al-Muẓaffar* (*Muẓaffar's 'Principles'*), a book on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence by Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, already mentioned above.
- *Al-Rasā'il* (*Treatises*), a book of studies on certainty and belief, scientific principles, contradiction and probability. After students have assimilated the contents of this book they are ready to move up to the next stage, 'outside research' (*baḥth al-khārij*).

This third stage marks the beginning of a student's ability to undertake independent judgement (*ijtihād*), and is the equivalent of graduate studies at the university. Jurisprudence is taught during this stage at an advanced level. The teacher knows his lessons by heart, quoting from memory all the traditions relevant to the subject without the need for a textbook. This is why this stage is known as 'outside research' or the highest stage of learning[56] (*dars khārij* or *baḥth khārij*): it is conducted apart from the textbooks. At this stage the student strives to complete his mastery of the subjects he learned in the previous stages. Good students who manage to do their 'outside research' well and become proficient in philosophy and other subjects may also spend some time writing and teaching.

Students at this stage are already teachers, scholars and *mujtahidūn*, who undertake juridical research of their own and teach what they study in daily

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lectures. Each teacher has his own research and teaching style. All learning at the 'outside research' stage is in groups, which may be very large, depending on the teacher's prestige, scientific excellence, and didactic skills. The in-depth studies at this stage, the freedom to criticize the opinions of others and the right to debate any proposition, whatever its source, give the students confidence in their own opinions and prepare them to become *sources of emulation* (*marāji' taqlīd*).[57]

This stage can last anywhere between three and five years, and then may be further extended for another five to seven years, and then again for periods of up to seven years each. Depending on a student's readiness and maturity, it may even last for an entire lifetime.[58]

The following are the best-known texts used at this stage:

- *Qawānīn al-Ḥikma fī al-uṣūl* (*The Rules of Wisdom in the Principles (of Jurisprudence)*) by al-Mīrzā (Abū al-Qāsim al-Qummī) (d. 1816 CE), and its commentary, *Ḥawāshī qawānīn al-Ḥikma fī al-uṣūl* (*Notes on the Rules of Wisdom in the Principles*), known also as *Ḥāshiyat al-uṣūl* by 'Alī Ibn al-Sayyid b. Ismā'īl al-Qazwīnī (d. 12 August 1880).
- *Dawābiṭ al-uṣūl* (*Rules of the Principles (of Jurisprudence)*, by al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Mūsawī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1262 AH/1845 CE), known as *Ṣāḥib al-ḍawābit* (*Author of the 'Rules'*).
- *Al-'Urwa al-wuthqā* (*The Tight Bond*) by al-Sayyid Kāẓim al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī al-Yazdī (d. 1918 CE), a compendium of Islamic juridical topics and opinions, both ancient and modern.

The reader will perhaps have noted that the Qur'ān does not figure in the curriculum of the *ḥawza* in any of the stages of study. At no time are *ḥawza* students tested on the Qur'ān; they may reach the level of *mujtahid* without having studied the Holy Book even at the level of familiarity with the plain text. The only Qur'ānic texts they are required to know are those with juridical consequences relevant to their studies.[59] In short, the Qur'ān is not a topic of study in the *ḥawza*.[60] A number of modern Shī'ite clerics have expressed concern over this state of affairs, among them 'Alī Khāmina'ī, who has warned that the absence of the Qur'ān from the curriculum of the *ḥāwza*s will create problems in the future, and as a policy is short-sighted.[61] The Shī'ite scholar Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh has also recognized the problem, without however offering a solution: 'It is perhaps surprising that the scientific *ḥawza*s in al-Najaf or Qumm or elsewhere have no compulsory Qur'ān course'.[62]

In all likelihood the real reason why the Qur'ān is not taught in *ḥawza*s is that Shī'ite scholars consider the existing Qur'ānic text corrupt and defective. They accuse the Prophet's companions of having deleted numerous verses which testify to the superiority of the Prophet's family, of 'Alī and his descendants the Imāms. According to Shī'ite tradition the true Qur'ān is the text prepared by 'Alī on the Prophet's instructions, a task which he carried out during a six-month period following the Prophet's death. 'Alī's Qur'ān contains 17,000 verses, in contrast to the existing text of 6,236 verses. In other words, two-thirds of the original text is missing. Among the missing passages are two whole *sūra*s or chapters, 'The Two Lights' (*al-nūrayn*)[63] and 'The Succession' (*al-wilāya*),[64] in addition to missing words in extant chapters. Although 'Alī was caliph or leader of the Muslim community for a number

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of years, Shī'ites believe that he refrained from promulgating his version of the Qur'ān during his period of rule due to the Shī'ite principle of 'dissimulation' (*taqiyya*), according to which one's religious convictions should not be made public in a hostile environment.[65]

Shī'ite tradition has it that after 'Alī finished collating the Qur'ān he approached the then ruling caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattāb and showed him what he had done. 'Umar's reaction was: 'We have no need of you or of your Qur'ān, for we possess the Qur'ān that was formulated by 'Uthmān b. 'Affān'. Whereupon 'Alī replied: 'Indeed you shall not see it again after today, nor shall anyone else see it until my son the Mahdī shall appear'.[66] A Shī'ite scholar who was asked why Shī'ites read the Qur'ān at all, if it is corrupted as they say, answered that on the order of the Shī'ite Imāms the existing Qur'ānic text is used in prayers and its commandments are obeyed, until such time as the 'hidden Imām' or Mahdī shall appear. He shall take the existing text up to heaven and bring in its place the version prepared by 'Ali, which shall from then on be read and obeyed.

As a rule *ḥawza* students are not given examinations of the kind used in schools and universities. Nor are they granted diplomas testifying to their academic accomplishments.

However, the Shī'ite cleric Āyat Allāh al-Burūjirdī (d. 1380 AH/1960 CE) instituted a system of monthly examinations for *ḥawza* students, in particular for those on a monthly stipend. A student who has reached the level of *mujtahid* and wishes to leave the *ḥawza* for a career as cleric in his own country or abroad will ask the senior 'sources of emulation' at his school for a character reference and a document which authorizes him to conduct public prayers and perform all other duties of religious leadership, and also empowers him to receive due payment from charity and the 'fifth' donated by members of the community. His teachers will provide him with a certificate testifying to his academic achievement and to his having attained the rank of *mujtahid*. The contents of the certificate are not uniform, but depend on the specific achievements of the student during his stay at the *ḥawza*.[67] Today in Iran the law stipulates that the 'preliminaries' stage of a *ḥawza* is the equivalent of a high-school education, the 'surfaces' stage that of a three-year college education, and the complete course, including the full curriculum in jurisprudence and fundamentals, that of a Ph.D. This law has been put into effect at the *ḥawza* in Qumm. Most *ḥawza*s in other parts of the world, however, do not give exams[68] or diplomas.

Students at a *Ḥawza* are not as a rule required to observe a specific dress code. In the *ḥawza*s of Iraq it is customary, however, that a student who descends from a religious family on his father's side will wear a turban from the very first day of study. Other students will begin wearing a turban after the end of the first year of study. In the Iranian *ḥawza*s, however, students only begin wearing a turban after a year or two of study at the 'surfaces' stage, whatever their family background. Shī'ites everywhere are in the habit of wearing a turban. A black turban[69] is a mark of belonging on one's father's side to the Hāshim clan, to which Fāṭima and the Prophet also belonged. Those who wear such a turban are called *al-sayyid* ('sir'), in addition to any other title they may have. Those who do not belong to the Prophet's clan wear a white turban, and are called *al-shaykh* ('venerable').[70]

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Ḥawza students receive titles in accordance with their academic achievements.[71] Most of these titles reflect the number of years a student has devoted to his studies and his level of achievement, and therefore change with time. Shīʿite sources mention a variety of titles which are no longer in use today, for example *thiqa* ('trust'), '*ayn* ('eye'), *rafī 'al-manzila* ('of high standing'), *jalīl al-qadr* ('of exalted rank'), *shaykh al-asḥāb* ('head of the companions'), *al-ra'īs al-aqdam* ('the senior head'), *naqīb al-'ulamā'* ('chief scholar'), *al-qāḍi* ('the judge'), *qāḍi al-quḍāt* ('judge of judges') and the like. Since the beginning of the fourteenth century AH the following titles have been in common use:

A. *Al-fāḍil* ('excellent') is the title given to a student upon having successfully completed the 'preliminaries' stage.
B. *Thiqat al-Islām* ('trust of Islam')[72] is the title given to students who have successfully completed their jurisprudence and foundation studies at the 'surfaces' stage and teach those in the 'preliminaries' stage. In Shīʿite tradition the title of *thiqat al-Islām* is associated specifically with the Shaykh Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī.
C. *Ḥujjat al-Islām* ('proof of Islam')[73] is the title of students at the 'outside research' stage, who also teach students in the 'surfaces' stage. The first Shīʿite jurist who held this title was the Shaykh 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Ālī al-Karakī (d. 940 AH/1534 CE), who received the title from the Safavid Shāh Tahmasib.[74]
D. *Ḥujjat al-Islām wal-muslimīn* ('proof of Islam and Muslims')[75] is a title reserved for students who have finished their 'outside research' in jurisprudence and 'foundations' and have attained the level of *ijtihād* ('independent judgement).
E. *Āyat Allāh* ('sign of God', Ayatollah)[76] is a title given only to those who have attained the highest level of *ijtihād*. Bearers of this title have the authority to issue religious rulings and to fill positions of religious leadership. In the *ḥawza* they teach students at the 'outside research' level.
F. *Āyat Allāh al-'uzmā* ('greatest sign of God; grand Ayatollah'): Only the greatest *mujtahidūn* are granted this title, such as have become *marja' taqlīd* ('sources of emulation')[77] whose teachings are accepted by Shīʿites around the world. The bearers of this title are considered the elite among Shīʿite scholars, whose word is law in all spheres of life.[78] They teach students of the 'outside research' level at one of the large *ḥawza*s, such as those at Qumm, Karbalā' and al-Najaf, and also perform management and supervisory tasks there. Their legal rulings and judicial opinions are published in the form of 'treatises' (*risāla 'ilmiyya*), which the faithful use as sources of counsel.

As for the title of '*Allāma* ('most erudite'), which formerly was reserved for the scholar al-Ḥillī, in Iran today it is still used sparingly, to refer just to the abovementioned cleric as well as to a small number of others, among them the Qur'ān commentator Sayyid Muḥsin al-Tabāṭabā'ī (d. 1402 AH/1981 CE). However, among religious scholars in Iraq and Lebanon it has come to be attached to clerics in general, whatever their standing or level of religious erudition.[79]

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Before concluding the discussion on this matter, two further comments are in order.

1. Some of these titles and ranks are not exclusively Shī'ite in character, but are used by Sunnis as well, especially among followers of the Shāfi'ī and Ḥanafi schools of jurisprudence, whose *mujtahidīn* are also divided into various grades and levels.[80] In addition, the title of *Ḥujjat al-Islām* is generally given to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), and that of *shaykh al-Islām* to Ibn Taymiyya.
2. Promotion from one title to the next in the *ḥawza* hierarchy may take a very long time, especially during the 'outside research' stage. Three factors are taken into account when considering a student for promotion:
   A. The student's diligence, talents and behaviour (in particular his piety).
   B. The esteem in which he is held by his peers at the *ḥawza* and by the public in mosques and *ḥusayniyya*s.
   C. His evaluation by senior teachers.

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While *ḥawza*s issue no official diplomas, as already pointed out above, teachers give their students two kinds of authorization, an 'authorization of independent judgement' (*ijāzat al-ijtihād*), also known as a 'scientific certificate (diploma)' (*al-shahāda al-'ilmiyya*), and an 'authorization of tradition transmission' (*ijāzat al-riwāya*), both of which will be discussed presently. Such authorizations are not issued on the basis of unified standards, common to all *mujtahidīn* in the various *ḥawza*s, and their value thus depends heavily on the reputation of the teacher who issues them. Students may continue to study with a certain teacher even after having received an authorization.[81]

When a student has reached the required level of *ijtihād* (independent judgement), so that his teacher is convinced that he is able to give rulings in all fields of Islamic jurisprudence using his own judgement, and has shown his ability to write down his opinions in a book of jurisprudence of his own or in a commentary on another's book (known as *Ḥāshiya* or 'marginal notes'),[82] his teacher will make it known among his students that this particular student has reached the level of independent judgement. This oral authorization serves as an official promotion to the level of *ijtihād*.[83] Upon receiving this authorization the newly promoted scholar may lead a circle of new students and begin his teaching career. Gradually he will become known in both clerical and lay circles through his students. His rulings on the matters brought to him by the faithful will eventually be published in a special volume known as a *risāla* ('treatise'). This is how the Shī'ite religious leadership develops throughout the world. It is composed of teachers whose reputation as 'sources of emulation' grows organically and who do not owe their positions to a political leader or to bureaucratic appointment.[84]

The authorization of independent judgement (*ijāzat al-ijtihād*) or scientific certificate (*al-shahāda al-'ilmiyya*) is a modern development. The first to have issued such authorizations was Shaykh Ḥasan Bāqir al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1946 CE). He gave so many authorizations to his students, especially those of Iranian nationality, that he became an object of ridicule, for he authorized quite a few unworthy students, merely because they were Iranian.[85] Since no fixed standards exist by which the

authorization is given, it happens that teachers grant it undeservingly to their own sons and to other favoured students. As a result, the leaders of the Shīʿite community ordered that no possessor of an authorization may call himself *mujtahid* or give rulings unless his authorized status has been recognized by his peers. This has had the effect that some Shīʿite *mujtahidīn* have refused to recognize authorizations given by their adversaries.[86]

The authorization of tradition transmission is inferior to the one discussed above. It is given by a teacher to a student who is capable of reciting traditions in the name of his teachers. The authorization permits such a student to transmit traditions to others, thus becoming part of the 'chain of transmission', going back to the twelve Imāms. This authorization may be either written or oral. It is not required for any position a student may wish to hold, although frequently it is sought by students because of the link it forges between them and the original relaters of the traditions, who were members of the Prophet's family.[87]

Every year hundreds of Shīʿite clerics graduate from the various *ḥawza*s. Local students usually remain in their own countries, and foreign students return to their original homelands. They perform many tasks such as giving sermons at religious services in mosques and *husayniyya*s,[88] doing missionary work, teaching, and running religious schools.[89] Some graduates do missionary work in Europe, an activity which began in the 1970s.[90] Today there are large numbers of *ḥawza* graduates on the Continent and in Britain who serve the needs of the Shīʿite communities there.

Some examples of this kind of activity are as follows. The Ayatollah al-Burujirdī from the *ḥawza* at Qumm sent Shaykh Muḥaqqiqī to the city of Hamburg in Germany in order to establish a Shīʿite mosque and Islamic centre there. After al-Burujirdī's death the Ayatollah Sayyid Fāḍil al-Mīlānī saw to the project's completion by sending Sayyid Bahshatī there to serve as head of the centre and imam of the mosque. This was in 1962. In 1967 the Muslim Arab Youth Organization for Great Britain and Ireland was founded at the urging of the imam Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, and in the 1970s the World Islamic League was established in London under the auspices of the Ayatollah Golpayagani, who sent several graduates of the *ḥawza* at Qumm to run it. The beginning of the 1980s saw an increase in Shīʿite activity throughout Europe, due to *ḥawza* graduates who were active in founding mosques, Islamic centres and various associations. The activities of *ḥawza* graduates in Europe have a double purpose:

A. To prevent local Shīʿites and especially Muslim youths from disappearing into Western society.
B. To improve the acquaintance of Europeans with Shīʿite Islam.[91]

Student–teacher relations are not necessarily limited to the educational context. In the *ḥawza* of Qumm ties between teachers and students are not very warm, but in al-Najaf and Karbalā' teachers take a personal and fatherly interest in their students. Outstanding students often marry a teacher's daughter. A well-known case in point is that of the *mujtahid* Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (d. 1816 CE) from the al-Najaf *ḥawza*, who married off his daughter to a student despite the protests of his nephew, who said to him: 'It would be better if you would marry off you daughter according to tribal custom, within your family'.[92]

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Married students receive a larger stipend than bachelors. Therefore it is often the case that a student must ask his teacher's permission to marry. Thus it is related of the *mujtahid* Ākhūnd Khurāsānī that he forbade his students to marry before they graduated. Those who did marry against his instructions were deprived of their monthly allowances.[93]

The nature of the student–teacher relationship is such that students have considerable choice and the leeway to leave teachers whom they perceive as indifferent to their needs. However, most students in fact stay with one teacher whom they respect and obey until his death. Senior teachers expect their students to act only with their permission. If a student begins to give lessons without his teacher's prior permission, the latter will usually break off contact with him. This is what happened, for example, at the *ḥawza* of Karbalā' between Ibrāhīm al-Qazwīnī and his teacher Sharīf al-'Ulamā'.

When a teacher dies it often happens that the circle of his students breaks up. The more prominent among them may set up study groups of their own, often in mutual rivalry. This is what happened, for example, to Anṣārī's students after his death, and to Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī's study circle at the *ḥawza* of Sāmirrā' after his death.[94] A student's loyalty to his teacher is personal, and after the latter's death does not pass over to members of his family, unless perhaps they are teachers as well.[95] Students can become overly proud of their own teachers. This was the case with the students of the *mujtahid*s Mīrzā Habīb Allāh Rashtī (d. 1895 CE) and Hādī Tihrāni (d. 1903 CE), whose students were so zealously loyal that they derided and scorned the lessons of other *mujtahid*s.[96]

A number of factors contribute to the close ties between teachers and their students. One of these is the *ḥawza*'s independence of the government. Another is the Shīʿite principle of *taqlīd* ('emulation'), which requires that every believing Shīʿite obey the rulings of a religious scholar of his choice throughout his life. The scholar in question must be one who is currently alive; the emulation of a deceased scholar is not permitted. Since every *ḥawza* student is expected to follow the rulings of his chosen teacher, the prominent clerics there are known as *marāji' taqlīd* ('sources of emulation'). The religious leadership of the Shīʿite community is therefore known as *Marjaʿiyya*.[97] Three factors contribute to a teacher's becoming a 'source of emulation': erudition, relations with members of different Shīʿite communities, and a talent for establishing a network of loyal students around the world who spread his teachings and raise funds for him. In some cases such students will also engage in political activity on their *mujtahid*'s instructions.

The competition among the various *mujtahid*s is another factor which contributes to close relations between student and teacher. Any *mujtahid* with leadership aspirations must gather as many students around him as he can. These students will later become his messengers in the various Shīʿite communities where they will work. Thus, for example, the *mujtahid* Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' spread the Shīʿite faith among the tribes of southern Iraq at the beginning of the nineteenth century by sending his most promising students to do missionary work there.

It should be noted that quite a few *ḥawza* students join the lessons of a specific *mujtahid* more for the relatively generous allowances he gives than for his academic reputation. Because he was well aware of this, the teacher Ākhūnd Khurasānī refused to give grants to his students after he had become an independent *mujtahid*,

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claiming that he wanted to attract students by academic excellence, and not by promises of financial gain.[98] Some students also solicit contributions from pilgrims to the shrines of Shī'ite Imāms at al-Najaf, Karbalā', Sāmirrā', Qumm and elsewhere. Some *mujtahid*s, on their part, encourage their students to disseminate their lectures among other students. Favoured students may also be appointed to leadership roles by their teachers, or even as eventual heirs to their position. Thus, for example, one of the best known leaders of the *ḥawza* at al-Najaf, Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-'Ulūm (d. 1797 CE) appointed a number of students to various positions: Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' was made responsible for the publication of the teacher's rulings and for organizational matters; Ḥasan Najafī was appointed as the teacher's assistant in leading the prayers; and Sharīf Muḥyī al-Dīn was made head of judicial matters. As another example, the *mujtahid* Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī let his outstanding students prepare for publication his rulings on matters which were brought before him.[99]

The rivalry between different *mujtahid*s and their adherents may sometimes degenerate into violence. The most famous case of this kind is the conflict which broke out at the beginning of the 1890s, when students of the *mujtahid* Hādī Ṭahrānī at al-Najaf, coming to his defence after his enemies had issued a ruling in which he was accused of heresy, were severely beaten. Many eventually left Ṭahrānī's lessons under pressure from his rivals. Another example is the conflict which broke out between students of the *mujtahid*s Ākhūnd Khurasānī and Kāẓim Yasdī because the teachers had opposing views on the Islamic revolution in Iran.[100] Such severe conflicts are rare, however.

Since the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century *ḥawza* teachers in Iraq and Iran have become more politically involved. As a result political factors have come to play a growing role in student–teacher relations. The best example for this is perhaps that provided by Ayatollah Ruḥ Allāh Khomeini in Iran in the years preceding the Islamic revolution there. Many of Khomeini's students joined in his political struggle against the Shah. After the revolution, when Khomeini had come to power, many of them came to occupy senior positions in the Iranian regime, thanks more to their political activities than to their academic achievements in the *ḥawza*. Still, as a rule relations between the *mujtahid*s in the *ḥawza*s and their students have retained their traditional form.[101]

Originally *ḥawza*s were apolitical and their teachers gave rulings only on purely religious matters. The political role of *ḥawza* teachers began to grow as a result of the absence of a Shī'ite state and their non-recognition of the existing regime. The first time a prominent *ḥawza* teacher publicly took a political stand was towards the end of the nineteenth century,[102] when the supreme 'source of emulation' al-Mīrzā Ḥasan Shīrāzī (d. 1911), who lived in the city of Sāmirrā' in Iraq, issued a ruling putting a total ban on tobacco,[103] its cultivation, trade and use. What prompted the ban was an agreement which the then-ruling Shah of Iran, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Qājārī (1848–1869), signed with a British company in 1890, giving the latter a monopoly on tobacco for 50 years in return for a one-time payment of 15,000 pounds sterling to the Iranian government plus one-quarter of the company's annual profits. Iranian farmers were incensed and rebelled in numerous areas of Iran, first in Tabrīz, the main tobacco-producing region in the country, then also in Iṣfahān and elsewhere. Al-Shīrāzī's ruling on tobacco went as follows: 'Smoking is now forbidden; whoever

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smokes wages war against the "imam of destiny", the hidden imam'. As a result of this ruling Iranians refrained from consuming tobacco for nearly two months, forcing the Shah to capitulate. The monopoly agreement with the British company was duly annulled in 1892.[104]

This ruling was perceived as a victory for the Shī'ite religious leadership (*Marja'iyya*): Al-Shīrāzī's *fatwa* (religious ruling) stopped the Shah in his tracks; with a few words he forced the country's ruler to publicly change his policy, thus demonstrating for the first time the powerful influence of *ḥawza* teachers on the community.

Over the years *ḥawza*s have espoused other political causes as well. During the first years of the Pahlavi dynasty (ruled 1925–1978) they waged holy war against the unveiling of women, with its attendant bloody clashes in the mosque of Kūharshād in the province of Khurāsān. In Baḥrain the local *ḥawza* was occasionally active politically, as was the *ḥawza* of Karbalā' during the period of Communist rule in Iraq and in the days of 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim. It was then that the cleric Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm published his famous ruling that 'Communism is heresy and apostasy, and whoever joins it joins heresy and apostasy'.[105] Political involvement was also demonstrated by the imam Rūḥ Allāh Khomeini, who criticized the government in statements, sermons and religious rulings which led the authorities to send him into exile. Eventually, however, he returned to Iran and the Islamic revolution triumphed.

The *ḥawza*s' growing political involvement in recent decades has put them under increasing pressure to stay out of politics. For example, after the failed revolt of 1920 in Iraq the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf was dealt a heavy blow when four of its most prominent 'sources of emulation', Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Nā'īnī, Shaykh Mahdī al-Khālīṣi and Shaykh Fatḥ Allāh al-Iṣfahānī were exiled to Iran by the Iraqi government and at least some of them were required to promise not to interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq before being allowed to return. The *ḥawza* at al-Najaf was also weakened at that time by the policies of the Shah Riḍā Pahlavi, who forbade sending the 'fifth' and other charitable contributions to al-Najaf. He also prevented Iranian nationals from travelling to Iraq, thereby strengthening the religious leadership at the *ḥawza* of Qumm, headed by Sayyid Ḥasan al-Burūjurdī. However, the Shah's son and successor, Muḥammad Riḍā Pahlavi, wished to introduce secular reforms in his country's social and economic policies, and thus sought to weaken the *ḥawza* of Qumm. In the 1960s he therefore supported the clerics at al-Najaf, in an attempt to relieve the pressure put on him by the Iranian religious leaders. Khomeini was sent away to Iraq, leaving the *ḥawza* at Qumm in the hands of Madārī, Golpayagani and al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī.

At first the Shah was pleased with the results of his actions. However, Iraq under the Ba'th Party (1968) began to take steps against the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf in an attempt to contain the role played by the 'source of emulation' Sayyid Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm. Thousands of students were sent into exile and Iranians were not allowed into Iraq. Al-Ḥakīm was replaced by the Iraqi authorities with the apolitical Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū'ī, in the hope of preventing unrest and of keeping the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf under control. This policy did in fact succeed. When the Islamic revolution began in Iran in 1979 its leaders called on Iraqis to rise up against their government, but this call received no support from al-Khū'ī. The Iraqi authorities as a result left

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the *ḥawza* and its leader in peace. The successful Islamic revolution in Iran attracted massive support for Khomeini among Shī'ites around the world, and the *ḥawza* at al-Najaf and its leader served as a counterbalance. Al-Khū'ī remained in al-Najaf until his death in 1992.

Despite the diminution in the size and status of the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf during the 1980s and 1990s, it has remained the centre of Shī'ite juridical authority. The Iraqi regime at the time did not impede its efforts to counter the activities of the Qumm *ḥawza* and the Iranian regime's attempts to extend its influence into Iraq. The Shī'ite religious leadership in Iraq during the period in question thus remained quite free of Iranian influence, despite the Ayatollah Khomeini's great popularity as a revolutionary political leader. The status of 'source of emulation' remained in the hands of a number of clerics in al-Najaf in Iraq. Even the Iraqi scholars who had emigrated to Iran refused (with the exception of Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Hakīm and Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī al-Āṣifī) to swear allegiance to Sayyid 'Alī Khāmina'ī or to recognize his status as a 'source of emulation'. Instead they left for various *ḥawza*s such as Qumm, al-Najaf and Beirut.

After the victory which the *uṣūliyya* school achieved over their rivals from *ikhbāriyya* school, Shī'ite clerics came to prominence as the people to whom members of the Shī'ite community turned to solve their problems and answer their questions. As a result a need arose for schools in which *mujtahid* 'sources of emulation' could be trained. The institution which answered this need was the *ḥawza*, which evolved considerably from its beginnings to the present, assuming a number of unique characteristics with respect to its financing, admissions policy, places of study, times of study, stages of study, official vacations and breaks, titles and textbooks.

Today, *ḥawza*s, especially those at al-Najaf and Qumm, accept students from Shī'ite communities throughout the world, regardless of ethnic background. The students pay no tuition fees, live in dormitories which are free as well, and receive allowances from their teachers. Their studies are of a purely religious nature, and in the course of study they develop a warm relationship with their teachers, which sometimes extends beyond the classroom and may even result in marriage into the teacher's family. *Ḥawza* graduates fulfil numerous positions, such as preachers in mosques, missionaries and teachers, and school administrators. As we have seen above, *ḥawza*s since the end of the nineteenth century have also begun playing a political role, often adopting positions hostile to the government of the country in which they are located. All of these developments have brought about a situation in which *ḥawza*s play an influential role in shaping the Shī'ite identity of students and turning them into an integral part of the Shī'ite community.

Notes

1. For more on this period see E. Kohlberg, 'Imām and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period', in Arjomand Said Amir (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shī'ism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p.34.
2. The 'minor occultation' lasted for 67 years, from 874 to 941 CE. For more details see, for example, A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp.85ff.

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3. ʿA. al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣālihī, ʿMaʿālim jāmiʿatayn al-Najaf al-ashraf wa-Karbalāʾ al-Muqaddasaʾ [ʿThe Features of the Two Colleges of al-Najaf and Karbalāʾ], in *Al-Najaf al-Ashraf ishāmāt fī al-Ḥaḍāra al-insāniyya* [*Al-Najaf, Contributions to Human Civilization*] (London: Markaz Karbalāʾ lil-buḥūth wal-dirāsāt, al-Markaz al-islāmī fī ingiltirā, 2000), pp.539–40.
4. For more on the Safavids see R.E. Darley-Doran, ʿSafawidsʾ, *EI*^{2}, Vol.8 (1995), pp.765–93.
5. F. al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil* [*Iran from the Inside*] (Cairo: Markaz al-ahrām, 4th printing, 1991), pp.57–8; S.A. Arjmand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imām* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.109.
6. However, historical sources do mention one clash during the period in question, which they describe as the first confrontation in modern Shīʿite history between clerics and the authorities and the first test of Shīʿite power. The incident in question took place during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās I (the Great) (ruled 1587–1629 CE). The cleric Mullā Ahmad Ardibillī had a quarrel with the Shah during which he told him that his authority was neither of divine origin nor due to his family's talents; rather, he served as the viceroy of the 'hidden imam', and if he violated the trust placed in him, the clerics had the right to remove him from his position. For details see H. Algar, *The Roots of the Islamic Revolution* (London: Open Press, 1983), p.15.
7. For details of the Qajar dynasty see A.K.S. Lambton, ʿKādjārʾ, *EI*^{2}, Vol.4 (1997), pp.387–99.
8. For more detail about the *ikhbāriyya* school see E. Kohlberg, ʿAkbāriyaʾ, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol.1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp.716–18; E. Kohlberg, 'Aspects of Akhbarī Thought in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in N. Levtzion and J.O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp.133–60; W. Madlung, ʿAkhbāriyyaʾ, *EI*^{2} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980) Supplement, 56–7; H. Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), pp.7ff, 19, 33–6, 64–6; G. Scarcia, 'Intorno alle controversie tra Aḥbārī e Uṣūlī Presso gli Imamiti di Persia', *Rivista delgi Studi Orientali*, Vol.33 (1958), pp.211–50.
9. For details see N. Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran', in N. Keddie (ed.), *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), p.223. For more on the dispute between the two schools and on the significance of the *ikhbāriyya* victory see Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama's Power', pp.211–30; L. Binder, 'The Proofs of Islam: Religion and Politics in Iran', in G. Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A.R. Gibb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), pp.118–14; D. Minshari, *Iran in Revolution* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1988), pp.44–5 (Hebrew).
10. H. Maḥmūd, ʿFikrat Āyat Allāh al-ʿuzmāʾ [ʿThe Thought of the Great Ayatollahʾ], http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/famous/2004/08/article02a.SHTML.
11. For more detail on the concept of emulation among Shīʿites see: L. Clarke, 'The Shīʿī Construction of Taqlid', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol.12, No.1 (2001), pp. 40–64.
12. For details see Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama's Power', p.223.
13. E.W. Lane, *An Arabic–English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1865), II, p.667, s.v. 'ḤWZ'; I.M. al-Miṣrī (Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makram), *Lisān al-ʿArab* [*Tongue of the Arabs Dictionary*] (Beirut: Dār Ṣadir, 1990), 5, pp.341–2, s.v. ḤWZ; al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil*, p.112.
14. ʿA.H. al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-ʿilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya* [*Ḥawzas in the Lands of Islam*] (Beirut: Bayt al-ʿilm lil-nābihīn, 1st printing, 2004), pp.21–2; Markaz al-takhṭīṭ wal-manāhij al-dirāsiyya [Centre for Planning and Curricula] (ed.), *al-Ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya fī fikr al-imām al-Khāmina'ī* [*The Ḥawza in the Thought of the Imām al-Khāmina'ī*] (Beirut: Maʿhad al-rasūl al-akram al-ʿālī lil-sharīʿa al-islāmiyya, 1st printing, 2002), p.18.
15. There are a number of reasons why Shīʿite religious leaders established *ḥawza*s next to the shrines of imāms and prominent religious scholars. These locations were considered auspicious and believed to afford protection; founders of *ḥawza*s also took into consideration the fact that the shrines were visited by many pilgrims, and that this way *ḥawza* students and the Shīʿite masses would come into closer contact; there are also those who believe that the proximity of *ḥawza*s to shrines imparted a popular rather than an elitist character to the learning there (although the character of the more advanced stages of *ḥawza* instruction is quite rarefied); furthermore, the very existence of a *ḥawza* next to a shrine causes visitors to the shrine to take counsel with the clerics there in the course of performing the pilgrimage ceremonies. For more details see G. bin Jiddu, ʿMadīnat Qummʾ [ʿThe City of Qummʾ], programme broadcast on *al-Jazeera television*, 10 January 2005, and again on 5 February 2005; see http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres.

16. See 'A. al-Bahādilī, 'al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya ladā al-muslimīn al-shī'a' ['The Shī'ite *Ḥawza*s'], *al-'Irfān*, Vol.80, No.3–4 (1996), p.124.
17. http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/under-scope/articles/2003/3/3/-8-1.htm.
18. http://www.attajdid.ma/old/archives/2001/138/Hiwarat.html.
19. M. al-Gharawi, *al-Hawzat al-'ilmiyya fi al-Najaf al-Ashraf* (*The Hawza in al-Najaf*) (Beirut: Dar al-adwa, 1994), p.232.
20. For more details on teaching methods at the *ḥawza*s see: M. al-Gharawī, *Ma'a 'ulamā 'al-Najaf* [*With the Scholars of al-Najaf*] (Beirut: Dār al-thaqalayn, 1st printing, 1999), 1, p.55ff.
21. Ibn Jiddu, 'Madinat Qumm', *op. cit*.
22. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.43–5; M. al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf al-Ashraf* [*The Ḥawza in al-Naja*] (Beirut: Dār al-aḍwā', 1st printing, 1994), pp.229–31.
23. For details see http://www.hawzah.com/nobtha/manhajiya.htm.
24. J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.34; R. Hillenbrand, 'Madrasa', *EI*^{2}, Vol.V (1986), pp.1123–54.
25. For more on the *khawāṣṣ* see J.B. àl Maḥbūba, *Māḍī al-Najaf wa-Ḥāḍiruhā* [*Najaf, Past and Present*] (al-Najaf: Maṭba'at al-adab, 1955), 3, p.417; M.M. Kāẓimī, *Aḥsan al-wadī'a fī tarājim ashhar mashāhīr mujtahidī al-shī'a* [*A Treasure of the Best: Biographies of the Most Renowned Shī'ite Mujtahidīn*] (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-najāḥ, 1348/1929); M.M.Ā.B. al-Ṭahrānī, *Nuqabā' al-bashar fī al-qarn al-rābi' 'ashar* [*The Leaders of Humanity in the Fourteenth Century AH*] (al-Najaf: al-Matba'a al-'Ilmiyya, 1954–1968), pp.792–3.
26. For details see M. Litvak, 'Continuity and Change in the Ulama Population of Najaf and Karbala, 1791–1904: A Socio-Demographic Study', *Iranian Studies*, Vol.23 (1990), pp.31–60.
27. M.M. Tunikauni, *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā'* [*Stories of the Scholars*] (Teheran: Kitabfurush-yi 'Ilmiyyah-'i Islamiyyah, 1346/1967), p.107; M.Ḥ. al-Dīn, *Ma'ārif al-rijāl fī tarājim al-'ulamā' wal-udabā'* [*The Lore of Men: Biographies of Scholars and Writers*] (al-Najaf, 1964–1965), 2, pp.376–9.
28. See, for example, M.M.Ā.B. al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Kirām al-baraza fī al-qarn al-thālith ba'da al-'ashara* [*Prominent Eminences in the Thirteenth Century AH*] (al-Najaf: al-Matba'a al-'Ilmiyya, 1954–1968), pp.382, 749–50; al-Ṭahrānī, *Nuqabā' al-bashar*, pp.140–7; M. al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a* [*Shī'ite Notables*] (Sayda: Matba'at al-Irfan, 1957), 17, p.164; al-Dīn, *Ma'ārif al-rijāl*, 2, pp.125–8.
29. Tankābūnī, *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā'*, p.55 and also Nole 27.
30. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.38–9; al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, p.232.
31. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.37–8; al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, p.234.
32. *Ḥawza* students from outside of Iran generally choose their textbooks and teachers by language; thus students from the Arab countries will choose Arab teachers and Arabic textbooks, and so on. For more details see, for example: al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, p.234; Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.37–8.
33. Such schools are particularly numerous in the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf, where they number 41. The oldest school there is the *murta'awiyya*. For details see al-Gharawī, *Ma'a 'ulamā' al-Najaf*, 1, p.39ff.
34. Ibid., 1, p.38.
35. http://www.attajdid.ma/old/archives/2001/138/Hiwarat.html; M.R. al-Muẓaffar, 'Jāmi'at al-Najaf al-ashraf wa-jāmi'at al-Qarawiyyīn' ['The University of al-Najaf and the University of al-Qarawiyyīn'], *Majallat al-mujamma 'al-*'ilmī al-'*irāqī*, Vol.11 (1964), p.296.
36. G. bin Jiddu, 'Ṭabī'at al-dirāsa fī Qumm', *aljazeera.net*, 2 May 2005.
37. al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil*, p.122.
38. M. Litvak, *Shī'ī Scholars of Nineteenth-century Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.32.
39. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.40–41; al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, pp.235–6.
40. The date of this commemoration is the 20th of the month of Ṣafar (commemoration of the fortieth day after Ḥusayn's death at Karbalā'), also known among Shī'ites as *maradd al-ra's* ('return of the head') since according to tradition on this day the beheaded Ḥusayn's head was returned from Damascus to Karbalā' and buried next to his body. On this day every year many Shī'ites visit the grave. The pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's shrine has become one of the five distinctive characteristics of Shī'ite practice, the other four being 51 daily prostrations, wearing a ring on the right hand, putting one's forehead on the soil when prostrating, and publicly proclaiming 'in the name of Allāh the Kind the Merciful'. For more details on Ḥusayn's death see, for example, 'A. al-Qummī, *Mafātīh al-jinān*

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[*Keys of Paradise*] (Beirut: Dār al-mujtabā, 1995), pp.501–3; M. Ayoub, 'Arba'in', *Encyclopaedia Iranīca*, Vol.2 (1985), p.276.

41. Al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, p.236.
42. On the 18th of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja, the anniversary of Ghadīr Khumm.
43. The Persian New Year falls on 21 March. It has been celebrated since Sassanid times and is still considered the most important secular holiday in Iran. For details see C.E. Bosworth, 'Nawrūz', *EI*^{2}, Vol.VII (1993), pp.1047–8.
44. M.K. al-Ṭurayḥī, *al-Najaf al-ashraf madīnat al-'ilm wal-'umrān* [*Najaf, City of Knowledge and Civilization*] (Beirut: Dār al-mahdī, 1st printing, 2002), p.195.
45. The financial situation of the *ḥawza*s of al-Najaf and Karbalā' has improved quite considerably since the tenth century AH, when they began to receive contributions from India, Iran and other Muslim countries. For details see al-Dīn, *Ma'ārif al-rijāl*, 2, pp.2–4; al-Ṭurayḥī, *al-Najaf al-ashraf*, p.195.
46. For more on the 'fifth' see A.A.A. Shachedina, 'Al-Khums: The Fifth in the Imamite Legal System', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol.39 (1980), pp.275–89.
47. Qur'ān 8:41.
48. Litvak, *Shī'ī Scholars of Nineteenth-century Iraq*, p.35.
49. Oudh is located in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, formerly a part of the Mogul Empire.
50. The Oudh Bequest was established in 1825 by king Ghāzi al-Dīn Ḥaydar, ruler of the Shī'ite kingdom of Oudh in India (1720–1856). It amounted to about 10,000 pounds sterling, which the British representative in Baghdad distributed annually to the senior *mujtahid*s of al-Najaf and Karbalā'. See for example J.R. Cole, *Roots of North India Shī'ism in Iran and Iraq. Religion and State in Awadh, 1772–1859* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988), p.327; J.R. Cole, 'Indian Money and the Holy Shrines of Iraq', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.22 (1986), pp.461–80; A. al-Kātib, *al-Marja'iyya al-dīniyya al-shī'iyya: dawla fī dawla wa-namūdhaj lil-dīmūqrāṭiyya al-sha'biyya* [*Shī'ite Religious Leadership: State within a State and a Model of a Popular Democracy*], http://www.fnoor.com/fn0163.htm, pp.7–8.
51. For more details on the stages of study at the *ḥawza* see J. al-Khalīlī, *Mawsū'at al-'atabāt al-muqaddasa* [*Encyclopedia of Holy Thresholds*] (3 vols.) (Baghdad: Dār al-ta'āruf, 1965–1970), 6, p.106; Anon, 'Le programme des études chez les Chiites et principalement chez ceux de Nadjef', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, Vol.23 (June 1913), pp.271–5.
52. For details on this stage see al-Muẓaffar, 'Jāmi'at al-Najaf', p.297.
53. Al-Muẓaffar, 'Jāmi'at al-Najaf', p.298.
54. Āl J. Al-Khalili, *Mawsu'at al-'atabatal-Muqaddasa* (Beirut: Mu'assasatal-A'lami lilbnatbu' at, 1987), p.379.
55. Al-Muẓaffar, 'Jāmi'at al-Najaf', pp.297–8.
56. For details on this stage see, for example, J.M. al-Najjār, *al-Ta'līm fī al-'irāq fī al-'ahd al-'uthmānī al-akhīr 1869–1918* [*Education in Iraq during the Latter Ottoman Period, 1869–1918*] (Baghdad: Dār al-shu'ūn al-thaqāfiyya, 2002), pp.96–8.
57. Al-Muẓaffar, 'Jāmi'at al-Najaf', pp.299–300.
58. Al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil*, p.123.
59. These are known as *fiqh al-Qur'ān* ('Qur'ānic Jurisprudence'), which consists of some 140 Qur'ānic verses dealing with various aspects of worship, including prayer, charity, pilgrimage and more; about 70 verses about marriage, divorce and other aspects of personal status; about 70 verses on commercial law; about 30 verses on criminal law; and some verses on war and peace. For more details on these see, for example, J. al-Ḥaqq, *Ma'a al-Qur'ān al-karīm* [*With the Holy Qur'ān*] (Cairo: Dar al Faruq, 1981), pp.166–7.
60. In recent years the *ḥawza* at Qumm has begun training *Ḥuffāẓ*, people who know the Qur'ān by heart. Thus says Shaykh Muḥammad al-Āṣifi, an Iraqi cleric who teaches at the Qumm *ḥawza* in Iran, in an interview with him published on the internet, http://www.attajdid.ma/old/archives/2001/138/Hiwarat.html.
61. 'A.Ḥ. Khamenei, *Thawābit wa-mutaghayyirāt al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya* [*Constant and Changing Aspects of Ḥawzas*] (Beirut: Dār al-ṣafwa, 1994), pp.109–11.
62. M.B. al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt al-'uqūl fī sharḥ akhbār āl al-rasūl* [*Mirror of Minds: Commentary on the Annals of the Messenger's Family*] (Teheran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 3rd printing, 1404–14 12 AH/1983–1991 CE), 12, p.525.

63. M.Ḥ.A.H. al-Khū'ī, *Minhāj al-barā'a fī sharḥ nahj al-balāgha* [*The Way of Proficiency in the Method of Rhetoric*] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-wafā', 1983), 2, p.214; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt al-'uqūl*, 12, p.525. The *sūra* of 'The Two Lights' appears in the following Shī'ite sources: Ḥ.b.M.T.N. al-Ṭabarsī, *Fatl al-khiṭāb fī ithbāt taḥrīf kitāb Rabb al-arbāb* [*Separation of the Speech: On Demonstrating the Corruption of the Master of Masters' Book*] (lithograph), p.180; M.B. al-Majlisi, *Tadhkirat al-a'imma* [*Commemoration of the Imāms*] (in Persian) (Iran: Manshūrāt mawlānā, 1871), pp.18–19; al-Khū'ī, *Minhāj al-balāgha*, 2, p.172.
64. The *sūra* of 'The Succession' appears in the following Shī'ite sources: al-Khū'ī, *Minhāj al-balāgha*, 2, p.217; al-Majlisī, *Tadhkirat al-a'imma*, pp.19–20; N.A.M. al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-Ni'māniyya* (*Ni'ma's Lights*) (Tabriz: Maṭba'at sharikat jāb Tabrīz, 1378–1382 AH/1959–1962 CE), 2, p.360.
65. The concept of dissimulation among Shī'ites involves hiding one's true beliefs, and doing and saying things they believe to be false, in order to prevent attacks on their property and lives. For details see, for example, E. Kohlberg, 'Some Imāmī Shī'ī Views on Taqiyya', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.95 (1975), pp.395–402; E. Meyer, 'Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der taqiyya', *Der Islam*, Vol.57 (1980), pp.246–80; N.J. Coulson, *Conflicts and Tensions in Islamic Jurisprudence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp.31–3; N.J. Coulson, *Succession in the Muslim Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp.108–34.
66. This refers to the twelfth imam, known by a number of different epithets, among them 'the rightly guided one' (*mahdī*), 'the awaited proof' (*al-Ḥujja al-muntaẓar*), and 'master of time' (*sāḥib al-zamān*). For details on him see, for example, J.G.J. Ter Haar, 'Muhamad al-Kā'im', *EI2*, Vol.VII (1993), p.443; A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1981), pp.39–77.
67. For details about these certificates see pp.845–6 in the present paper.
68. An exception to this is provided by the *Ḥawza zaynabiyya*, located in the Sayyida Zaynab neighbourhood of Damascus, where annual exams are required of students at all three stages of study. The exams, which have both oral and written parts, last for a whole week and begin every year on the 11th day of the month of Rabī 'al-Thanī. Passing the exams is a condition for moving up to higher level of study. For details see: http://www.ebaa.net/takreer-khberi/024/024.htm.
69. In emulation of the Prophet's turban, made of black silk and named 'the cloud', because it fluttered in the wind like a rain cloud (for details see Ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī (Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makram), *Lisān al-'arab* (Beirut: Dār al-fikra, 1990), 1, p.461, s.v. 'SHB'; Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, 4, p.1314 s.v. 'S.H.B'; K. Sindawi, 'The Maqātil in Shī'ite Literature' (Hebrew), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel, 2000, p.109 (*Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, 3, p.276, No.3573–5, 3, p.278, No.3577–9; *Wasā'il al-shī'a*, 3, p.512, No.4323; *al-Kāfī*, 1, p.236, No.9, 6, p.462, No.1). The Prophet gave it to 'Alī, and whenever the latter appeared in it the Prophet would say: "'Alī has come to you in a cloud' (for details see *Biḥār al-anwār*, 16, p.251). The turban was bequeathed from one imam to the other until the twelfth, along with the Prophet's arms.
70. Al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, p.242.
71. For details on these epithets see Al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, pp.239–40; Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.56–7.
72. Al-Gharawī uses the epithet *'allāma*, but it would appear that Shī'ites are not all in agreement as to its use. For details see al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, p.239.
73. Al-Gharawī calls this title just '*Ḥujja*'. See ibid., p.239.
74. See J. al-Qazwīnī, *Ta'rīkh al-mu'assasa al-dīniyya al-shī'iyya* [*History of the Shī'ite Religious Establishment*] (Beirut: Dār al-rāfidayn, 2005), p.436; M.B. al-Khuwānasārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-'ulamā' wal-sādāt* [*Gardens of Paradise: On the Conditions of the Scholars and Masters*] (Teheran: Dar al Kutub al-Islamiyya, 1957), 2, p.94.
75. Al-Gharawī does not mention this title, demonstrating the fact that, as we pointed out above, some titles are used in certain *ḥawza*s but not in others.
76. For more detail on the title of Ayatollah see J. Calmard, 'Āyatullāh', *EI²* (1980), Supplement, pp.103–4. The first person to possess this title was Shaykh Abū Manṣūr b. Yūsuf al-Ḥillī (d. 726 AH/1352 CE) (see al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, p.56). After him no one was given this title for many centuries. The next person to be called Ayatollah was Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111 AH/1699 CE). Another bearer of the title was Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir b. Akmal al-Bahbahānī, known also as *al-Waḥīd* ('the only one') (d. 1205 AH/1791 CE). Since the eighteenth century the title has been granted more freely (for details see J. al-Qazwīnī, *Ta'rikh al-mu'assasa al-dīniyya al-shī'iyya* (Beirut: Dār al-rāfidayn, 1st printing, 2005), pp.433–4.

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77. For more detail on the concept of 'source of emulation' see J. Calmard, 'Marja' i Taḳlīd', *EI*^{2}, Vol.VII (1991), pp.548–56. It should be noted that such a 'source of emulation' is neither elected (like the Pope) nor appointed (like the head of *al-Azhar*). Rather, he comes to hold his position thanks to his erudition. A 'source of emulation' does not have to belong to a specific nationality; thus, for example, in the *ḥawza* of al-Najaf he may be an Arab or an Iranian. However, all 'sources of emulation' at a *ḥawza* are always either Arabs or Iranians. The reason this is so lies in the fact that *ḥawza* students of all other nationalities return to their native lands after their studies, where they may become 'sources of emulation' locally. For details see al-Amīn, *al-Mawsū'a*, s.v. 'al-Najaf', p.378.
78. http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/famous/2004/08/articleo2a.shtml.
79. al-Qazwīnī, *Ta'rīkh al-mu'assasa al-dīniyya al-shī'iyya*, p.435.
80. For details see 'A.Ḥ. al-Jundī, *Naḥwa taqnīn jadīd lil-mu'āmalāt wal-'uqūbāt fī al-fiqh al-islāmī* [*Towards a New Codification of Procedures and Punishments in Islamic Jurisprudence*] (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya lil-ṭibā'a wal-nashr, 1963), p.33; al-Huwaydī, *Īran min al-dākhil*, p.125.
81. M. Litvak, 'Teachers and Students in Najaf and Karbalā' during the Nineteenth Century', in A. Ayalon and D.Y. Wasserstein (eds.), *Madrasa: Education, Religion and State in the Middle East* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2004), p.133 (Hebrew).
82. By composing commentaries or 'marginal notes' to existing books of jurisprudence, students make an important contribution to connecting the rulings of past Shī'ite jurists with those of the present. 'Marginal notes' often contain innovative ideas which expand the scope of past rulings. For more details on this matter see: M.M.Ā.B. al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-shī'a* [*Guide to Shī'ite Writings*] (al-Najaf: Maṭba'at al-qaḍā', 1936), 6, p.7.
83. Al-Ṭurayḥī, *al-Najaf al-ashraf*, pp.178–9; http://www.ḥawzah.com/nobtha/ijtihad.htm.
84. Al-Kātib, *al-Marja'iyya al-dīniyya al-shī'iyya*; http://www.fnoor.com/fn0163.htm, p.2; al-Najjār, *al-Ta'līm fī al-'irāq fī al-'ahd al-'uthmānī*, p.98.
85. B. al-Maḥbūba, *Māḍi al-Najaf*, 1, pp.143, 379, 2, p.139; M.A. al-'Āmilī, *A'yān al-shī'a*, 44, p.6.
86. For details see M. Litvak, *Shī'i Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq: The 'Ulama' of Namaf and Karbala* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Chapter 5.
87. For details see: M. al-Mar'ashī, 'Dawr ijāzat al-riwāya fī al-taqrīb' ['The Role of Transmission Authorization in Taqrīb], *Risālat al-taqrīb*, 23, pp.96–7; http://www.alhakeem.com/~istefta/day/23-07-04.htm; A.A.A.Ḥ. Sachedina, *The Just Ruler (al-Sulṭān al-'ādil) in Shī'ite Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.59.
88. A *ḥusayniyya* is a large, mosque-like hall, in which the mourning ceremonies on the anniversary of al-Ḥusayn's death take place every year. The first *ḥusayniyya*s appeared during the Fatimid period. The largest can be found in Shī'ite holy cities such as Karbala', al-Najaf, Mashhad and Qumm. In addition to their function as the site of annual mourning ceremonies, they also serve as hostels where pilgrims may stay free of charge. They are often named after the city whose inhabitants erected it, for example 'the *Ḥusayniyya* of the Iṣfahānis', etc. *ḥusayniyya*s are called by a number of different names. Thus, for example, in the Gulf States they are referred to as *ma'tam* (literally: 'funeral service') and in India and Pakistan they are know as *imam bara* ('the imām's centre'), the imām in this case being, of course, Ḥusayn b. 'Alī. Since the beginning of the twentieth century *ḥusayniyya*s have become social and cultural meeting places which play a role that is religious and also social, political and cultural. For more details see: S.A. 'Alī, *Mukhtasar ta'rīkh al-'arab* [*A Short History of the Arabs*] (Beirut: Dar al-'ilm lil-malāyīn, 5th printing, 1990), p.499; J. Muḥaddithī, *Mawsū'at 'āshūrā'* (*The 'Āshūra' Encyclopedia*), translated from the Persian by Z. al-'Iṣāmī (Beirut: Dār al-rasūl al-akram and Dār al-Ḥujja al-bayḍā', 1st printing, 1997), p.143; M. Karīm, *Al-Nūr* magazine No.50 (London, 1995), p.42; I. al-Ḥaydari, *Trajīdiyā Karbalā'* [*The Tragedy of Karbalā'*] (Beirut: Dār al-sāqī, 1st printing, 1999), p.164; S.H. Ṭam'a, *Karbalā' fī al-dhākira* [*Karbalā' in Memory*] (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-'Ānī, 1988), p.180; J. Calmard, 'Ḥosaynīya', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Fascicule 5 (New York: The Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 2004), Vol. XII, pp.517–18.
89. http://www.attajdid.ma/old/archives/2001/138/Hiwarat.html.
90. http://darislam.com/home/alfekr/data/feker5/19.htm.
91. For details see M. al-Qazwīnī, 'Mas'ūliyyāt al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya wal-marākiz al-islāmiyya tuhāha muslimī ūrubbā' ['The Responsibilities of *Ḥawza*s and Islamic Centres towards the Muslims of Europe'], http://darislam.com.home/alfekr/data/feker5/1g.htm.

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92. Al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a* (Sayda: Matba'at al-'Irfan, 1957), 32, p.72; Ḥ. al-Ṣadr, *Takmilat amal al-āmil* [*Supplement to 'Amal al-āmil'*] (Qumm: Maktabat āyat Allāh Mar'ashi, 1404 AH/1985–1986 CE), pp.22, 394.
93. M.M.Ā.B. al-Ṭahrānī, *Hadiyyat al-zārī ilā al-imām al-mujaddid al-shīrāzī* [*Gift of the Faultfinder to the Innovative Imam al-Shīrāzī*] (Teheran: Mīqāt, 1984), p.73.
94. See, for example, the conflict which broke out between Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' and his student Sayyid Jawād al-'Āmilī when the latter decided to become an independent *mujtahid*. For details see al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a*, 17, p.164.
95. In some cases the sons of a teacher inherited the respect of their father's students after his death, if it happened that they, too, were teachers. A good case in point is the relation between the family of al-Naḥḥāwī and that of Baḥr al-'Ulūm. For details see Maḥbūba, *Mādī al-Najaf*, 3, pp.450–9; al-Dīn, *Ma'ārif al-rijāl*, 2, pp.277–82, 3, pp.217–19. Another example is the relationship between Muḥammad al-'Anūz and that of Kāshif al-Ghiṭā'; see al-Dīn, *Ma'ārif al-rijāl*, 2, pp.351–2.
96. Another example is that of the students of the *mujtahid* Ḥasan Shīrāzī, who joined him in the *ḥawza* of Sāmirrā' out of pride in their association with him. For details see al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a*, 20, pp.40, 96.
97. For details about the development of the *marja'iyya* see A. Amanat, 'In Between the Madrasa and Marketplace: The Designation of Clerical Leadership in Modern Shī'ism', in S.A. Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shī'ism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp.98–132.
98. Al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a*, 40, pp.55, 324–425.
99. Mahbūba, *Mādī al-Najaf*, 3, pp.253, 433; Ṭahrānī, *al-Kirām al-barara*, pp.600–5; Ṭahrānī, *Nuqabā' al-bashar*, p.963; A. al-Khāqānī, *Shu'arā' al-ghariyy* [*Poets of al-Ghariyy*] (al-Najaf: al-Matba'a al-haydariyya, 1954), 6, pp.179–80; al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a*, 23, p.279.
100. A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.52–3.
101. For details about the relation between politics and knowledge in Iranian *ḥawza*s see, for example, Amanat, 'In Between the Madrasa and Marketplace', pp.98–132; M. Litvak, 'The Rule of the Clerics in Iran: Vision and Reality', *The New Orient*, Vol.42 (2001), pp.167–84 (Hebrew).
102. Sir John Malcolm noticed the power of the *mujtahid*s as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century: 'it is difficult to describe the operation of the separate parts, or of the whole, on a system of government, exposed like that of Persia, to continual and violent changes; but though these changes produce a great effect on the character and condition of the nation, they neither destroy nor materially alter those rules which, guarded as they are usage, by public opinion, and by religion, are seldom infringed with impunity'; see Sir J. Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the most Early Period to Present Time* (London: J. Murray, 1829), 2, p.344.
103. For details about this *fatwa* see al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil*, pp.63–5; Ṭ. Majdhūb, 'al-'irsh lil-mulūk wal-sulṭa lil-a'imma' ['The Throne Belongs to Kings, and Rule to Imāms'], *Milaff al-nahār al-'arabī wal-dawlī*, 19 February 1979.
104. On this matter see A. Lamton, *Qajar Persia: Eleven Studies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987), pp.249–51. According to Naẓm al-Islām Karamānī the *fatwa* was originally given by al-Mīrzā Ḥasan al-Ashtiyānī, whence it passed into the hands of al-Shīrāzī (for details see Lamton, *Qajar Persia*, p.249). It may be pointed out that although the Shāh annulled the agreement, the affair remained to haunt him, and eventually cost him his life, for he was shot to death in 1869 by a student of al-Afghānī. For details see Y. Ibrahimyan, *Khalfiyyāt wa-'awāmil al-thawra al-dusturiyya* [*Background and Factors of the Constitutional Revolution*, a study of the writers of Iran, 1900–1980] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-abhath al-arabiyya, 1980), p.44.
105. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya*, pp.37–8; al-Gharawī, *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf*, pp.169–79.

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The Zaynabiyya *Ḥawza* in Damascus and its Role in Shī'ite Religious Instruction

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The *ḥawza* as an institution of Shī'ite religious instruction has been the subject of a number of studies in both East and West, which have dealt with the matter from a number of different perspectives. However, none of these studies, to the best of our knowledge, has dealt comprehensively with the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* and its role in Shī'ite religious instruction in Syria. This is what we shall attempt to do below.

The following are the most significant studies on the subject which have appeared to date.

A. History of the *ḥawza*s and the structure of education in them. Two books exist on this subject. One, Muḥammad al-Gharawī's *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī al-Najaf al-ashraf* (*The Ḥawza in Najaf*) (Beirut, Dār al-aḍwā', 1994), is a historical study about the beginnings of religious instruction in al-Najaf, the curriculum, dormitory schools, the teaching system and the like.

The second, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣaliḥī's *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya* (*The Ḥawzas in the Lands of Islam*) (Beirut, Bayt al-'ilm lil-nābihīn, 2004), in addition to providing a history of the *ḥawza* as an institution, with particular emphasis on the one in al-Najaf, deals with numerous aspects of instruction and gives some details about the most important *ḥawza*s throughout the Shī'ite world, including an exhaustive chapter about the *ḥawza zaynabiyya* in Damascus. The book ends with some information about secondary *ḥawza*s.

B. The role played by Shī'ite clerics and how they are trained. On this subject we possess Meir Litvak's comprehensive *Shī'ī Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), dealing mainly with Shī'ite clerics in the two cities of al-Najaf and Karbalā', their social and political climate, methods of religious instruction and how it was financed, and also the role the clerics played in leading the Shī'ite community and standing up to the Sunnī rulers of Baghdad.

Another work, this time in Arabic, is Ḥusayn Baraka al-Shāmī's *al-Marja'iyya al-dīniyya min al-dhāt ilā al-mu'assasa* (*Religious Authority from Self to Institution*) (London, Dār al-islām, 1999), which describes the role of clerics ('religious authority') in the life of the Shī'ite community, using the cleric Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh as an example.

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Recently the Beirut-based 'Ma'had al-rasūl al-akram al-'ālī lil-sharī'a wal-dirāsāt al-islāmiyya' (The Most Honourable Messenger Higher Institute for Sharī'a and Islamic Studies) published a study entitled *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fī fikr al-imām al-Khāmina'ī* (*The Ḥawza in the Thought of the Imam al-Khāmina'ī*) (2002), composed by the 'Markaz al-takhṭīṭ wal-manāhij al-dirāsiyya' (The Centre for Planning and Curricula). The book presents the views of al-Khāmina'ī as to the educational philosophy needed in *ḥawza* instruction in our day and age, including certain reforms which he believes are necessary.

C. History of Shī'ite religious instruction. On this topic two relevant studies were published by Jawdat al-Qazwīnī in 2005. In the first, *al-Mu'assasa al-dīniyya al-shī'iyya min al-'aṣr al-buwayhī ilā nihāyat al-'aṣr al-ṣafawī al-awwal 912–1592 m* (*The Shī'ite Religious Establishment from the Buwayhid Period until the End of the First Safavid Period, 912–1592 CE*), the author provides a historical survey of the history of religious instruction among Shī'ites and the obstacles it faced, from the 'major occultation' until the end of the sixteenth century CE, in the schools of al-Ḥilla, Jabal 'Āmil, Bahrain and in the Safavid state.

The second work, *al-Marja'iyya al-dīniyya al-'ulyā 'ind al-shī'a al-imāmiyya* (*Religious Authority in Twelver Shī'ism*), contains a history of Shī'ite religious rulings and the role which Shī'ite jurists played in Iraq and Iran from the Buwayhid period to modern times.

D. A study by the present author, 'Modern Shī'ite Religious *Ḥawza* Instruction and Its Role in Shaping Shī'ite Identity', *Middle Eastern Studies* (2007).

According to Twelver Shī'ite belief, after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (632 CE), leadership of the community rightfully belonged to the 12 Imāms, who directed the community as a whole and also solved problems faced by individual members. This was the case from the first Imām, 'Alī b. Abi Ṭālib (d. 661) until the disappearance of the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. al-Ḥasan (873), which marked the beginning of the 'minor occultation'.[1] During this period of absence the Imām is said to have maintained contact with his community indirectly, by means of four successive lieutenants whom he appointed to mediate between himself and the faithful. These four, known among Shī'ites as the 'four ambassadors', were: 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-'Amrī or al-'Umarī (d. 874–875 CE), Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-'Amrī, son of the preceding (d. 304 AH/916–917 CE), al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhī (d. 326/938) and 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samurī (d. 328/940–941). With the death of the last 'ambassador', the 'minor occultation' came to an end,[2] and the 'major occultation' began. According to Shī'ite belief, this occultation, which continues down to our day, will end with the reappearance of the Mahdī, the twelfth Imām, who will replace present-day oppression with justice.[3]

Shī'ites followed in their Imāms' footsteps until the Safavids[4] (1501–1736) came to power in Iran. In the year 1551 the Safavid Shāh Ismā'īl proclaimed Twelver Shī'ism as the official religion of the kingdom.[5] This marked the beginning of a concerted effort by the rulers to impose Shī'ite belief throughout Iran. Their capital city Tabrīz and other important towns such as Iṣfahān, Qumm and Mashhad became important centres of Shī'ite learning, whose scholars were in

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demand everywhere. During the Safavid period relations between the Shīʿite clergy and the authorities were good.[6] The Shāh's rule had religious sanction and he was considered God's shadow on earth, while the clerics fulfilled important governmental functions.

At the end of the eighteenth century CE the Safavids were overthrown by the Qajar dynasty[7] (ruled 1796–1925). This gave rise to an internal conflict within the Shīʿite camp concerning the proper way to address the everyday problems which the faithful faced in those unsettled times. Two schools emerged, the *ikhbāriyya*,[8] according to whom the Qur'ān together with the usages sanctioned by the Imāms were sufficient to solve any problems which the faithful may have, with the help of the clerics, of course; and the second school, the *uṣūliyya*, which maintained that major problems could only be solved by the greatest religious authority of the day, a man who could be trusted to use his own independent judgement (*ijtihād*) appropriately. Every generation had its own supreme legist or *mujtahid*. Already the Safavids encouraged the appeal to the 'absolute independent judgement' (*al-ijtihād al-muṭlaq*) of the *mujtahid* known as al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī (d. 1585). At that time a campaign began which called for venerating leading clerics and emulating them, since they were the 'sources of thought' (*marāji' al-fikr*) and possessors of the right to use the tool of independent judgment (*ijtihād*). The name *uṣūliyya* given to this school is derived from its belief in the main principles (*uṣūl*) of Islamic jurisprudence used for the derivation of legal rulings using *ijtihād*.

The *uṣūliyya* school was strongly opposed by its rival, the *akhbariyya*,[9] but eventually triumphed over it. This victory contributed to the rise of the principle of emulation (*taqlīd*), which requires every follower of Twelver Shīʿism to choose a cleric whom he emulates, whose advice he seeks, and who serves as a link between the believer and the twelfth Imām, the 'concealed' Mahdī.[10]

In consequence the Shīʿite community was divided into two classes, one consisting of *mujtahid*s to be emulated (*muqallad*), and the other of those who follow and emulate (*muqallid*) the former and whose advice they seek on religious and other matters. The need thus arose for training a cadre of clerics whose judgements would be authoritative (*mujtahid muqallad*),[11] and who would lead the Shīʿite community and give it instruction. The principle of emulation served to strengthen the ties between the faithful and their religious leadership. A modern scholar has rightly pointed out that the victory of the *uṣūliyya* and its success in promoting the status of its *mujtahidūn* has given Shīʿite clerics an authority which greatly exceeds that of any of their Sunnī counterparts, and which gives their rulings a greater legitimacy among the faithful than the civil laws passed by the state.[12]

The institution entrusted to train the needed *mujtahidūn* was the *ḥawza* (full term: *al-ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya*), a word derived from the root ḤWZ, meaning to obtain or possess. The verbal noun *ḥawz* in its substantive use means an enclosed area. *Ḥawza* therefore means an enclosure or precinct.[13] The full term used by Shīʿites is *al-ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya* ('enclosure of learning'). In modern usage it refers to an institution of Shīʿite religious learning in which the curriculum is based on the principle of independent judgement (*ijtihād*).[14] Although the full term for the institution is *al-ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya*, it is commonly denoted by the word *ḥawza* alone, devoid of attributes. Most *ḥawza*s are located next to the tombs of Imāms or other

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great clerics.[15] The reason for this lies in the fact that Shīʿite pilgrims give endowments to these shrines, and the funds thus made available benefit all the adjoining institutions. This provides the *ḥawza* with a means of support, enables pilgrims to seek the advice of the students and teachers there, and frees the latter to pursue religious learning.[16]

Before describing the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* in greater detail, we would like to say a few words concerning Shīʿism and conversion to Shīʿism in Syria. The origins of Shīʿism in Syria go back to the first century AH, although it began to become widespread only in the fourth century, after the Shīʿite Hamdānī state took over Aleppo in 904 CE. Shīʿism also continued to spread in the era of the Ismāʿīlī Fāṭimī state (969–1172 CE), which controlled Egypt and extended its rule into Syria during the fifth century AH.

After that period conversion to Shīʿism went into decline, under the Ayyubid (1171–1250) and Ottoman (1517–1798) regimes, which were hostile to it; Twelver Shīʿites in Syria were thus reduced to a small minority.

It is very difficult today to get hold of accurate statistics on the various religious groups in Syria because of the regime's sensitivity. However, according to the American State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*, 'Alawīs, Ismā' īlīs and Twelver Shīʿites constitute some 13 per cent of the Syrian population, or about 2.2 million people out of a total of 18 million.[17] In contrast, according to the report published in 2005 by the Ibn Khaldūn Centre for Developmental Studies in Cairo, entitled *Denominations, Sects and Ethnic Groups*, Shīʿites constitute 1 per cent of the Syrian population and Alawīs 9 per cent.[18] Shīʿite websites, on the other hand, maintain that Shīʿites are 2 per cent of the population.[19]

In addition to Syria's own Shīʿite Arab population, there is also an Iranian Shīʿite émigré community, most of whose members live in Damascus, as well as a large number of Iraqi Shīʿites, who moved to Syria in the 1970s and 1980s because of the repressive measures taken by the former Iraqi regime. The number of Iraqi Shīʿites increased after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, as a result of the instability and insecurity there and the sectarian violence. According to official sources the number of Iraqi refugees in Syria (of all sects and ethnicities) stands at 1.2 million, while the UN Commission for Refugees estimates their number at 800,000. The largest concentration of Iraqi Shīʿites in Syria is to be found in the Lady Zaynab neighbourhood to the south of the capital Damascus; some Shīʿites also live in a number of neighbourhoods in Damascus as well as in some villages and towns in the Hims and Hama provinces.

In Damascus the Shīʿite presence is particularly strong in the neighbourhood of Ḥayy al-Amīn,[20] where there are two Shīʿite mosques, The Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib mosque and the al-Zahrā' mosque, as well as a venerable school, al-Madrasa al-Muḥsiniyya. Syria is also the site of one of Shīʿism's main holy places, the Great Lady Zaynab Shrine,[21] burial site of Zaynab, daughter of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 672 CE),[22] visited by numerous Shīʿite pilgrims from the Gulf States, Iraq and Iran. It is surrounded by many *ḥusayniyya*s, and the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza*,[23] the third largest institution of its kind in the world, after those of al-Najaf and Qumm. The tomb of Lady Zaynab is the largest Shīʿite centre in Syria, where lectures are given and Shīʿite religious celebrations are held. It is also a centre for the dissemination of Shīʿite

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books. The shrine has given its name to the whole vicinity, which is now called Lady Zaynab. Zaynab's tomb consists of a mausoleum with a golden dome, two tall 54-metre high minarets and decorated porticoes. It covers a total area of 15,000 m^2 and can hold up to 5000 people.[24]

The second most important Shīʿite pilgrimage site in Syria is the tomb of Lady Ruqayya, daughter of the imam al-Ḥusayn (d. 680 CE), which is located slightly more than 100 metres behind the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, next to the Paradise Gate,[25] in the Sūq al-ʿAmmāra neighbourhood, in the al-Sādāt area. Its importance lies also in its central location in Damascus, near the al-Ḥamīdiyya market and the Umayyad Mosque. It attracts numerous pilgrims. Daily public prayers are held there, as well as the weekly Friday prayer. Shaykh Nabīl al-Ḥalbāwī, a prominent Syrian Shīʿite leads the prayers there.

Two other Shīʿite pilgrimage sites are the tomb of Lady Sakīna,[26] daughter of al-Ḥusayn (d. 735 CE), located in the 'Small Gate' (*al-bāb al-ṣaghīr*) cemetery, named after one of the gates in the wall of ancient Damascus, and the 'Drop' (*al-nuqṭa*) Mosque, also known as 'The Aleppo Shrine' (*al-mashhad fī Ḥalab*).

The last-mentioned shrine is named the 'Drop' because Shīʿites believe that a drop of blood fell from the severed head of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (d. 680 CE) when it was being taken from Karbalā' to Damascus. The drop is said to have fallen on a stone near Aleppo, on which the head had been laid. According to Shīʿite belief the mark of the drop has remained on the stone, around which the shrine was then built; it is also known as the Shrine of the Imam al-Ḥusayn.[27] In the year 333/944 Sayf al-Dawla constructed a large building over the stone, and since the fourth century AH it has become a major pilgrimage site. In 1959 the Ja'farī Islamic Building and Charity Organization built a new courtyard for the shrine, and next to it also the Imam al-Ḥusayn Institute for Islamic Studies, a car park for visitors, and a charity hospital.[28] Today it is the most important Shīʿite institution in Aleppo. It is located at the foot of Mt. al-Jawshan, west of the city. Shīʿite books and brochures are disseminated at the shrine, which also provides sumptuous meals to pilgrims.

Two further Shīʿite shrines are the tombs of the Companions ʿAmmār b. Yāsir (d. 37/657) and 'Uways al-Qarnī (d. 37/657) in the city of al-Raqqa.[29] The two shrines were constructed by Iranian institutions, and both of them also house an Iranian cultural bureau. We should note that the Iranian mission in Damascus has undertaken to enhance a number of saints' shrines. The first stage in such an undertaking consists of enlarging the existing building and adding a sign with the name of a member of the Prophet's family, usually that of a son or daughter of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib or of one his sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. After the grave has been consecrated to that person it is turned into a pilgrimage site, visited initially by hundreds and eventually by thousands of Iranian pilgrims. When after a few years the shrine's status as the tomb of a member of 'Alī's family has been established, the Iranians acquire the land around the tomb and construct various buildings, including a large *ḥusayniyya*, a hotel, shops and residences. The *ḥusayniyya* then becomes a centre for Iranian missionary work, from which the call goes out to convert to Shīʿism. This has happened at quite a number of tombs in Syria.

The shrines are financially self-supporting. Administratively they belong to the Ministry of Religious Endowments, as do the Shīʿite mosques and imams in Syria. The Shīʿites in Syria do not follow any single 'source of emulation'.[30] Some are followers of the Ayatollah 'Alī al-Sīstānī, others adhere to Ayatollah 'Alī Khāmina'ī, Iran's senior religious authority, and yet others prefer Lebanon's Sayyid Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh.

After the death of Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad in the year 2000 his son Bashār became President. Under his rule the balance was undermined and Iranian influence in Syria grew apace. Campaigns were instituted among ordinary Syrians to encourage them to convert to Shīʿism. In addition, the regime naturalized Iranians and pro-Iranian Iraqi Shīʿites. According to some reports 20,000 Iranians have been given Syrian citizenship.[31] The Syrian regime under Bashār al-Asad has also brought over a special militia whose task is to protect the regime. The militia is composed of about 3000 Iranian troops as well as a number of units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard that specialize in urban warfare. These troops operate alongside the Syrian Republican Guard, headed by Māhir al-Asad.[32]

Since Bashār al-Asad took over the presidency in Syria a number of changes have also occurred in the official propaganda line as reflected in the Syrian local and satellite television channels.

Methods of Shīʿite proselytizing in Syria are:

A. *The call to convert to Shīʿism in Syria has as its starting point a verbal opposition to American policy*. Shīʿites in Syria are under the influence of a mythical 'resistance' created by anti-American media which oppose the existence of Israel and support the resistance movements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as in Lebanon.
B. *Iraqi immigrants and Iranian tourists*. Iraqi Shīʿite immigrants as well as Iranian pilgrims who come to visit Shīʿite shrines in Syria constitute a considerable human army imbued with the Shīʿite creed, and help disseminate its ideas and doctrines.
C. *Shīʿite shrines*. The Shīʿites in Syria renovate ancient shrines, build *ḥawza*s next to them, and purchase the adjoining properties.
D. *Shīʿite celebrations and festivals*. Shīʿites celebrate many holidays, to which Sunnīs are invited as well and are thus exposed to Shīʿite ideas. Among these holidays are 'Ashūrā', al-Ghadīr, and the birth and death dates of the Twelver Shīʿite imams and others.
E. *Official support for Shīʿite missionaries*. For example, at the beginning of the 2006/07 school year a Shīʿite religious college was opened in the town of al-Ṭabaqa, with an enrolment of over 200 students. The Shīʿites quickly and easily received a permit to open this college, although in the whole country there are only two Sunnī religious colleges, one in Damascus and the other in Aleppo; the latter had to wait decades for approval, which finally came in 2007.

   The new Shīʿite college is not the only one of its kind in Syria. Another was established in Idlib. Recently it has been reported that Iran has received permission from the Syrian authorities to establish a large Iranian university with numerous faculties.[33]

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F. *Construction of ḥawzas*. The Shīʿites build *ḥawza*s next to their shrines and establish religious authorities which give them independence of a kind with respect to religious rulings and the leadership of the community.

G. *Cultural activities*. Shīʿites engage in various types of cultural activities, such as lectures and sermons on Shīʿite holidays, in shrines such as Lady Zaynab or in the al-Amīn neighbourhood; occasional seminars at the al-Asad library; dissemination of Shīʿite books, especially at book fairs held by the Iranian Cultural Centre on al-Marja Square (the office of the Iranian cultural attaché) or the main library of the university. Such books, which have political as well as theological content, are also distributed free of charge at the entrances to mosques. Recordings of CDs Shīʿite programmes and of books are also distributed for a nominal price or free of charge. Other distributed materials include Iranian newspapers and magazines, such as the newspaper *Jīhān* in Arabic.

H. *Educational inducements*. Scholarships are made available for study at Qumm and Teheran, especially for advanced students chosen for their academic or social background. These institutions give preferential treatment to students who support the authorities. Such students are then given jobs, as happened with Syria's Chief Muftī, Aḥmad al-Ḥassūn and others. Other students are permitted to study at the *ḥawza* of the shrine of Lady Zaynab, where they do not pay tuition fees and are provided with a monthly unconditional stipend.

I. *Economic inducements*. Shīʿite missionaries go so far as to offer cash to people, or to help them in their commercial or official dealings. Such inducements are usually offered to notables and heads of clans, especially in the area between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers, where this method is merely a continuation of the Iraqi system for controlling the people through the heads of tribes and clans. Another way to encourage converts is by providing them with a wife, or with some basic necessities such as oil, sugar, rice and butter.

J. *Shīʿite satellite channels*. A number of such channels broadcast Shīʿite traditions, pictures, lectures and Qur'ānic exegesis and openly carry missionary content. This is especially true of the al-Manār network which broadcasts from Lebanon and promotes conversion to Shīʿism in Syria and elsewhere. Syrian television, too, has given a weekly (at least) hour-long broadcast slot to the Shīʿite missionary 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Muhājir. It also gives broadcast time to the Iraqi 'Abd al-Zahrā', especially during the month of Ramadan, when he reads Qur'ānic verses which are followed by songs and hymns in praise of the Prophet's family.

K. *Name inducements*. Converts to Shīʿism who name their sons Ḥasan or Ḥusayn, especially in the province of Idlib, receive a gift of 2500 Syrian pounds, as do people who name their daughters Zaynab. Also, students named 'Alī receive special attention.

L. *Loans*. Poor people are given loans in the name of Muslim solidarity, and eventually are told they do not have to pay the money back.

M. *Visits to Iran*. Tribal heads, especially in the al-Raqqa area, are invited by the Iranian ambassador to visit Iran free of charge, as are also other notables in Syria, such as professors at religious colleges. One such trip was made by a group of tribal leaders headed by Ḥamīd al-Jarbā, the Sheikh of the Shamr tribe, Fayṣal al-'Arīf, the Sheikh of the Khafāja tribe, and 'Awwād

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al-'Awāmleh, the Sheikh of the al-Wahb tribe from the town of al-Buwayhij. Such visitors return to Syria laden with presents and with bulging pockets.

N. *Health care*. Free medical care is provided in Iranian charity hospitals in Syria, such as the Imam Khomeini Hospital in Damascus, the Red Crescent Hospital in Aleppo and the Charity Hospital in the same city.

O. *Libraries*. Lending libraries, called 'stores' (*ḥawānīt*) have been opened. The libraries also distribute books free of charge, and give prizes (of 1000 Syrian pounds per book) to readers.[34]

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Shī'ites have been active in a number of regions of Syria, especially in Damascus. Among the more notable activities in the latter area have been the following:

A. Book fairs in which Islamic and Shī'ite books are exhibited. Such fairs are usually set up at the Iranian Cultural Centre, at the cultural attaché's headquarters on al-Marja Square, at the Iranian embassy in al-Mazza, or in the main library of the University of Damascus.

B. Seminars which take place from time to time at the al-Asad Library, at the Cultural Centre or at the shrine of Lady Zaynab. The latest such seminar took place at the al-Asad Library; it was attended by numerous teachers at religious colleges.

C. Sermon festivals on Shī'ite holidays such as 'Ashūrā', held usually either at the shrine of Lady Zaynab or in the al-Amīn neighbourhood.

D. Acquisition and renovation of tombs which are claimed to hold the remains of members of the Prophet's family. This has happened in the al-'Ammāra neighbourhood as well as in the towns of 'Adhrā and Dārayyā.

E. Promotion of studies at the Lady Zaynab *ḥawza*, where no tuition is charged and students receive a monthly stipend.

F. Providing inducements to conversion, in the form of financial aid, and arranging marriages or temporary liaisons.

G. Dissemination of CDs of Shī'ite books at very low prices, or free of charge, as well as books, journals and newspapers.

Factors favouring conversion to Shī'ism in Syria are:

A. *The role of the Iranian cultural chancellery in Damascus*

Prominent Syrians have accused the Iranian cultural chancellery in Damascus of activities which are not consistent with its declared aims, that it promotes conversion to Shī'ism in Syria, and that it actually operates under Iran's Supreme Spiritual Leader 'Alī Khāmina'ī, despite its official status as a part of the Iranian embassy.

Thus, for example, Dr. Wahba al-Zaḥīlī, a well-known Syrian Islamic cleric and thinker, accused the chancellery of offering inducements in the form of cash, houses and cars in order to attract people to Shī'ism. He pointed out that 'hundreds of Syrians in Deir al-Zor, al-Raqqa, Dar'ā and the al-Ghūṭa region near Damascus have succumbed to the chancellery's inducements and converted

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to Shīʿism' (according to a newspaper report from 31 October 2006 on the news website belonging to the Middle East Centre in London).

The head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, ʿAlī Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Bayānūnī, told the Quds Press Agency that 'the entire conversion to Shīʿism activity in Syria is just an attempt to create confusion so as to bring about a change in the social composition of Syrian society'. The former Syrian Vice President ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Khaddām, who opposes the present regime, has issued declarations in the press and through statements issued by the opposition Front for National Salvation, in which he criticized the Iranian ambassador in Damascus and accused him of engaging in missionary work in Syria. Khaddām has been quoted to the effect that 'the Iranian ambassador in Damascus moves around Syria with greater freedom than its own Prime Minister'.[35]

In an interview with UPI Khaddām declared that the Iranian ambassador exploited the poverty in the country by building shrines where Companions of the Prophet supposedly stayed and giving money to the poor, with the objective of building an Iranian party within Syria by means of converting people to Shīʿism. Observers have pointed out that the close relations between Syria and Iran, and their strategic alliance since 1980, have enabled Iran to operate on Syrian territory. Thus senior Syrian and Iranian officials attend the various celebrations organized by the chancellery in Damascus on Iranian national holidays such as the annual celebration in honour of the Iranian Revolution, and religious holidays such as the death of Ḥusayn on the day of 'Ashūrā'.[36] In addition, numerous Iranian tourists visit Lady Zaynab's shrine in Damascus. The number of pilgrims, which stood at 27,000 in 1978, rose to 202,000 in 2003. This also has brought about an increase in Iranian influence in Syria.[37]

B. *The Lebanon War in the summer of 2006 and the wave of admiration for Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh, leader of Hezbollah*

When speaking about the relations between Syria and Iran it is impossible to ignore the role of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shīʿite organization with ideological and strategic ties to Iran. While Syria was in control of Lebanon it provided the organization with political and military support and in return Hezbollah was Syria's main ally in Lebanon. This state of affairs naturally affected the situation of the Shīʿites in Syria itself.

The 33-day war between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006 gave rise to a wave of admiration for Hezbollah leader Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh and for his organization, in view of their resistance against Israel. As a result Shīʿism came to be seen in a more positive light and more Syrian Sunnīs converted to Shīʿism. Hezbollah's so-called 'achievements' and 'victories' in the war also brought about an increase in Iranian activity. According to Muṣṭafā al-Sāda, a young Shīʿite cleric who came into contact with numerous Sunnīs who showed an interest in adopting the Shīʿite creed, 'George Bush did us a service and unified the Arabs'. Al-Sāda said that he knew 75 Sunnīs in Damascus who converted to Shīʿism since the beginning of hostilities in Lebanon in July 2007, and that the war gave additional impetus to the rising trend in recent years to adopt the Shīʿite creed.

Wāʾil Khalīl, a 21-year-old student of international law at Damascus University, says that 'for the first time in my life I saw a war in which the

> Arabs were victorious'. Subsequently the Sunnī Khalīl began to observe Shī'ite rites and he plans to convert completely to Shī'ism.[38]

Ever since the war pictures of Ḥasan Naṣr Allāḥ and of Khāmina'ī are displayed more than any of the region's political leaders. Anyone walking through the streets of Damascus today will see pictures in which the Syrian President Bashār al-Asad is depicted together with the Hezbollah leader. These pictures are displayed on shop fronts, private cars, buses, even on walls. Local Syrian intellectuals explain that these pictures express patriotism rather than sectarian religious feelings,[39] since NaÒr Allāh has become a national more than a religious symbol.[40] This kind of demonstration of pro-Shī'ite feeling is, I believe, only momentary, based on an emotional reaction rather than on deep-seated religious conviction.[41]

In 1975 the Iraqi authorities expelled a number of students at the Najaf *ḥawza* to Damascus, where they settled around the Lady Zaynab Shrine.[42] The fact was noticed by the many visitors to the shrine, among them Sayyid Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī, who had been living in Beirut since 1970. He asked them why they were there and they answered that they had been persecuted by the Iraqi regime. Upon al-Shīrāzī's return to Beirut he met with his assistants Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāsī, Shaykh Ghulām Riḍā al-Wafā'ī and Sayyid Muḥsin al-Khātimī regarding what they could do about the students who had found refuge at the Zaynab Shrine in the hope of eventually going to study at one of the *ḥawza*s in Iran or returning to their respective homelands, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Al-Karbāsī suggested that these students should establish the kernel for a new *ḥawza* where they were. Al-Shīrāzī agreed to this proposal, discussed it at a number of meetings, and within two months a decision was taken to supervise the activities of these students, although without announcing the establishment of a *ḥawza*. As more and more students were expelled from the *ḥawza* at al-Najaf, many chose to settle in the vicinity of the Lady Zaynab Shrine until eventually there were some 250 students there.

At first the *ḥawza* occupied rented classrooms, its students did not possess official resident permits, and its curriculum was rudimentary and unofficial. On 16 June 1979, Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī was assassinated in Beirut. He was killed on the spot, and as a result the situation in the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* became critical. It was Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāsī who saved the day; he made a number of trips to the Gulf States, Iran, Syria and elsewhere, and managed to collect enough contributions to ensure the *ḥawza*'s continued operation. He also made contact with the Syrian authorities and succeeded in regularizing the presence of foreign students at the *ḥawza*. He even managed to obtain academic recognition for it from the Syrian authorities, who also agreed to give the *ḥawza*'s Syrian students an exemption from military service. In the *ḥawza* itself al-Karbāsī introduced a new financial system and made numerous changes in the way it was run.[43]

The *ḥawza*'s founder, Sayyid Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī, was born in the city of al-Najaf in Iraq, in 1937. He studied in Karbalā' with the greatest scholars there and eventually became a writer, poet and intellectual. The Iraqi authorities sent him to prison, where he was tortured and would have been executed, were it not for the intervention of two imams, Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū'ī and Khomeini, who succeeded in extricating

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him from Iraq. He then travelled to Beirut for medical treatment. He settled in Lebanon, where he established a number of cultural and social institutions, such as the Ṣādiq Publishing House, the Imam al-Mahdi *ḥawza* and the Scholars' Chamber in Lebanon. He has more than 60 publications to his name, the best-known of which is *The Encyclopedia of the Word*. He was killed in Beirut in 1980 when attending a ceremony which he organized at the Imam al-Mahdī School in memory of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr.[44]

As mentioned above, Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāsī was appointed as head of the *ḥawza* after the death of its founder al-Shīrāzī in 1979. Immediately upon his arrival he convened a great conference attended by the entire student body. There he handed out forms on which the students were asked to write down their views and suggestions. Then he spoke to them, urging them to study and accept the institution's new financial and academic regulations, and promising them that he would find jobs for the *ḥawza*'s graduates in Syria and elsewhere. Al-Karbāsī introduced a new financial system, whereby every student received a salary in accordance with his level of studies, the size of his family, and his medical, travel, living and other expenses. One change which he introduced into the curriculum was the addition of Comparative Islamic Jurisprudence. He also developed the *ḥawza*'s physical infrastructure. In the course of two years he acquired a number of buildings, the most important being the one on the main road leading from Damascus to the Lady Zaynab neighbourhood, which today serves as a cultural centre. He also acquired six buildings. The three largest he turned into schools, and of the others one became the *ḥawza*'s administrative building, another a dormitory for the students, and the third a library.

In 1985 al-Karbāsī decided to leave Syria. He asked his colleague Sayyid Muḥsin al-Khātamī to take over as head of the *ḥawza*. The latter agreed to do so, but resigned shortly after, and the post was given to Sayyid Ja'far al-Shīrāzī. He was succeeded by Shaykh Muḥammad Amīn al-Ghafūrī, who still holds the position today.

Observers of the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza*'s evolution are all agreed that its physical appearance improved markedly during al-Karbāsī's term of office, and it drew students from all over the Shī'ite world. Al-Karbāsī introduced an eight-year curriculum, made Arabic the sole language of instruction, played an active role in determining the topics to be taught and introduced a number of new subjects in keeping with the spirit of the times. He also put a new financial system into place for assisting the *ḥawza*'s students, managed to obtain official residence permits for foreign students, found employment for graduates, opened preparatory courses, provided graduates with diplomas, separated student lodgings from their classrooms, and acquired numerous buildings for the *ḥawza*. As a result of al-Karbāsī's regulations, some of which are not to be found in other *ḥawza*s, the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* in Damascus has become a model for others. Delegations from other *ḥawza*s visit it in order to learn the way it is run and apply its lessons elsewhere.[45]

The Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* requires prospective students to meet the following criteria:[46]

A. The age of the candidate must be between 15 and 30.
B. A candidate must undergo physical and psychological examinations and found healthy and fit physically and mentally.
C. A candidate must have finished at least elementary school.

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D. He must be able to learn in Arabic, to read and to understand the language.
E. He must provide two recommendations from two religious scholars in his town.
F. He must be without a criminal record, and not be considered a criminal in his own country.
G. He must not be wanted on criminal charges in Iran, if an Iranian citizen, or in Syria, if a Syrian citizen.
H. He must present only original documents (a condition waived in the case of Iraqis).
I. He must pass the entrance examination.
J. He must refrain from all political activity.
K. He must present his guardian's permission in writing to enter the *ḥawza*.

The students at the *ḥawza* come from a number of countries, in decreasing order: Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Africa and Iran. The total number of students at the *ḥawza* is between 250 and 300. In all, some 20 to 25 nationalities are represented there.[47] The number of married students is twice as high as the number of bachelors. In all, there are some 600 family members of students and faculty at the *ḥawza*; the average size of the families is five persons, including the parents. And, as already mentioned, the students' ages are between 15 and 30.[48]

Each day at the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* is divided into two study periods, of four lessons in the morning and two lessons in the evening. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes, to which another 15 minutes' break is added. Classes begin at eight o'clock in the morning, until noon, and then again between four and six pm. Between the two study periods students go home, pray, eat with their families and rest, before returning to continue their daily schedule.[49]

Studies at the *ḥawza* are divided into five stages, as follows:[50]

The first stage: This is called *al-muqaddimāt* (preliminaries). It consists of three years of study in which the students learn Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), principles of Arabic grammar, Islamic doctrine, logic, ethics, and Qur'ān. The latter includes reading, recital, memorization and an introduction to Qur'ān studies. It should be noted that in this respect the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* differs from its counterparts elsewhere, in which Qur'ān is not on the curriculum.

The second stage: Called *al-suṭūḥ al-mutawassiṭa* (intermediate surfaces), this stage, too, consists of three years, during which students continue studying Islamic jurisprudence, focusing on details of judicial argumentation and the principles of jurisprudence. In their language studies they concentrate mainly on rhetoric and philosophy, in Islamic doctrine on scholastic theology, and in Qur'ān studies on exegesis.

The third stage: This stage, called *al-suṭūḥ al-'ulyā* (advanced surfaces), consists of four years of study. The subjects in this stage are Islamic jurisprudence, principles of Arabic, philosophy, biographies of important personages and *ḥadīth* (tradition), theology, and introduction to comparative jurisprudence.

The fourth stage: This stage prepares the student for outside research, and lasts for five full years, during which students engage in a detailed study of comparative jurisprudence, fundamentals of jurisprudence, contemporary religions (origins,

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principles and evidence for their truth), deductive study of divine wisdom, and meditation on the Qur'ān.
The fifth stage: At this stage students specialize in one or more of the subjects they studied previously, such as jurisprudence, Qur'ān, and rational and traditional sciences. This stage is not limited in time; students stay in it until they obtain a certificate of independent judgement (*al-ijtihād*).[51]

In eight years of study the student learns 17 different subjects:[52] doctrine, ethics, Arabic morphology, Qur'ān recital, Islamic jurisprudence and comparative jurisprudence, a foreign language, exegesis, mathematics, history, Arabic syntax, logic, *ḥadīth*, biographies of important personages, foundations of jurisprudence, rhetoric and literature, economics, sociology. Each subject has its own textbook.[53]

There are two kinds of breaks in the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza*, the weekend (every Thursday and Friday) and seasonal and holiday breaks.[54] Among the second kind are the following: The anniversary of the death of the *ḥawza*'s founder Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī, the anniversaries of Lady Zaynab's birthday and the day of her death (her tomb is near the *ḥawza*, which was named in her honour).

The school year begins at the new year AH, on the first of the month of *muḥarram*, although in fact classes only start at the beginning of the following month, *ṣafar*. The academic year is divided into three trimesters, each one lasting three months, as follows (by months of the Muslim year):

Ṣafar – study.
Rabī' al-awwal – study.
Rabī' al-thānī– study.
Jumādā al-ūlā – first trimester break; first trimester exams at the end of the month.
Jumādā al-thāniya – study.
Rajab – study.
Sha'bān – study.
Ramaḍān – second trimester break; second trimester exams at the end of the month.
Shawwāl – study.
Dhū al-qa'da – study.
Dhū al-ḥijja – study.
Muḥarram – third trimester break; third trimester exams at the end of the month.

The official vacations at the *ḥawza* are the following:

A. The three trimester breaks in the months of *muḥarram*, *jumādā al-'ūlā* and *ramaḍān*.
B. The dates of birth and death of the 'infallible 14' (the Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima and the 12 imams).
C. The anniversaries of the birth and death of Lady Zaynab.
D. The three main holidays, *al-fiṭr*, *al-aḍḥā* and *al-ghadīr*.
E. The fortieth day after the death of the imām al-Ḥusayn (the twentieth day of the month of *ṣafar*, the day when al-Ḥusayn's head was returned and buried with his body at Karbalā').

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F. The anniversary of the assassination of Sayyid Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī, founder of the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza*.

An examination of the holidays and breaks at the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* shows that they do not differ from those commonly observed in other *ḥawza*s, such as those of al-Najaf and Qumm, with the exception of the anniversary of al-Shīrāzī's assassination.[55]

The *ḥawza*'s dormitory section has regulations governing the lives of the unmarried students.[56] Each room of the dormitory has three beds, three desks and three cupboards for three people. The kitchen and bathroom is outside the room. The rooms are furnished in a modern style. Three people are responsible for running the dormitories. They take turns, and are assisted by two other people, a watchman and a cleaner.

Below are some of the more important regulations:

A. The dormitory's main door is locked from two hours after sunset until dawn.
B. It is forbidden to raise one's voice from four hours after sunset, in order to let students rest and read in peace.
C. No guests are permitted during resting and reading periods.
D. Students are not permitted to remain outside the dormitory overnight without specific permission from the administration.
E. Married students are not accepted into the dormitories.

There are also regulations governing morals, health, etc.

Classroom attendance is also regulated as follows:[57]

A. Students must come to the classroom 15 minutes before class begins, at 8 am and at 4 pm.
B. Students may not remain in the classroom more than a half-an-hour after the end of classes.
C. Every student is required to take a written exam at the beginning of every school day.
D. Attendance is compulsory in all lessons.
E. Students must maintain good hygiene and proper comportment.
F. Students may not raise provocative issues in or out of class.
G. During a lecture students may not debate issues that are irrelevant to the topic being discussed.
H. Students must obey the classroom regulations, such as attendance. A student who is absent for more than three days (that is, 18 hours) in one trimester without permission will be expelled.
I. In all matters concerning the curriculum the student may not consult with anyone but the section management.

The *ḥawza* provides two types of assistance.[58] One is a monthly stipend, for an amount which varies according to the student's needs and his scholastic achievements, to which is added a stipend given to students who join the *ḥawza*. As an example, we present below the figures for the academic year 1410 AH (1981):

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	Unmarried students	*Married students*
Basic stipend	100 Syrian pounds	200 Syrian pounds
First year	100 + 25	200 + 50
Second year	100 + 50	200 + 100
Third year	100 + 75	200 + 75
Fourth year	100 + 100	200 + 200
Fifth year	100 + 125	200 + 250
Sixth year	100 + 150	300 + 250
Seventh year	100 + 175	350 + 200
Eighth year	100 + 200	400 + 200

In other words, every unmarried student at the *ḥawza* receives a basic stipend of 100 Syrian pounds and married students 200. To this another 25 pounds are added every year to unmarried students and 50 to married students. Thus an unmarried student receives 125 pounds at the beginning of his studies and a married student receives 250 pounds. Additional money is given to students with families for their children, their mother, sister and second wife, if they all live with the student. For every child he gets 10 Syrian pounds, for adults such as a brother, sister or mother he gets 50 pounds, and for a second wife he gets an additional 100 pounds. Thus, for example, a married student in his eighth year of study, with two wives and 10 children, a mother, a sister and a mother-in-law, will receive the following stipend:

Basic stipend	200 Syrian pounds
Eighth year supplement	400
Ten children	100
Second wife	100
Mother	50
Sister	50
Mother-in-law	50
Total	950 Syrian pounds

The most important types of financial assistance given by the *ḥawza* to its students are the following:

A. Rent: The *ḥawza* pays over 100 pounds for every room rented by a married student.
B. Buying a house: The *ḥawza* gives a grant of 5000 pounds to students who buy a house for the first time.
C. Marriage grant: 5000 pounds for students who marry for the first time.
D. Medical bills: The *ḥawza* pays for sick students' medication once a month.
E. Birth grant: 250 pounds for every child born to a student.
F. Circumcision grant: 50 pounds.
G. Hospital bills: Students' hospital bills are paid in full by the *ḥawza*.
H. Heating costs: The *ḥawza* pays students' heating bills in winter.

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The *ḥawza* gives the following prizes to its students:

A. Every year each student receives an award of 25 Syrian pounds.
B. Outstanding first-, second- and third-year students receive material awards.
C. Diligent students with an excellent attendance record receive a material award.

At the beginning of each school year teachers are given awards in accordance with their attendance record and educational achievements.[59]

The Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* is financed by contributions from Shīʿite merchants from the Gulf States, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Africa and Europe, as well as from pledges and the 'fifth' tax.[60]

The *ḥawza* is involved in various social, cultural and missionary activities, the most important of which are listed below:

A. The *ḥawza* sends missionaries to various places, inside Syria and abroad, especially during the months of *muḥarram* and *ramaḍān*, and also in the pilgrimage month of *dhū al-ḥijja*, when they are sent to Mecca in order to instruct Shīʿite pilgrims on the proper way to carry out the *ḥajj*. Missionaries are also sent to England and Pakistan. The missionaries' expenses are paid by the *ḥawza*.
B. The *ḥawza* gives courses on matters of Islamic law. The courses are organized by Sayyid al-Ḥillī and Shaykh al-Maftaḥ. The subjects taught there are Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic literature and Islamic economics.
C. A preparatory course in Arabic and the principles of Islam is given by Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasanayn to those who want to be accepted as students at the *ḥawza*, since all instruction at the *ḥawza* is given in Arabic.
D. The *ḥawza* conducts ceremonies on Shīʿite anniversaries. These ceremonies, in which both local and other preachers participate, take place in the *ḥawza*'s *ḥusayniyya*.
E. Public prayers at the *ḥawza*'s *ḥusayniyya* and the shrine of Sayyida Ruqayya. Shaykh al-Maqidsī and Shaykh al-Wafā'ī lead the prayers.
F. Courses for women on Islamic jurisprudence, morals and married life, given by Sayyid al-Ḥaydarī.
G. Courses for children up to 12 years of age on the principles of Islam, the Qur'ān, Islamic law, and songs for the Prophet's birthday, given by Shaykh al-Tawassulī.
H. Courses given during vacation periods, one for improving preachers' skills and another on literary writing, given under the guidance of Professor 'Arif al-Ṣūṣ.
I. The *ḥawza* library, managed by Shaykh Jumʿa.
J. A library in the Lady Zaynab neighborhood, managed by Professor Abū al-Ḥasanayn.
K. Construction of mosques and *ḥusayniyya*s throughout Syria, including the northern part of the country.

The *ḥawza* engages in numerous additional activities which cannot all be enumerated here, such as disseminating Shīʿite books written by its teachers, printing greeting cards for the *ʿīd al-fiṭr* and *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* holidays, and taking care of needy widows and orphans.[61]

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The *ḥawza*'s administration consists of the following:

A. Shaykh Ayatollah Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāsī is the *ḥawza*'s principal. He has two assistants. The first assistant is Shaykh 'Abd al-Riḍā al-Wafā'ī and the second is Shaykh al-Amīnī.
B. The general administration: deals with student affairs through the specific administrations and committees.
C. The dormitory administration, headed today by Sayyid al-Mashhadī.
D. The academic administration, headed today by Shaykh al-Farqānī.
E. The teachers' committee, headed by Shaykh al-Maqdisī.
F. The general services committee, headed by Shaykh al-Aḥmadī.

The principal decides on all important matters, in every case in which the administrations or committees cannot come to a decision, and in general on all major issues concerning the *ḥawza*. Today Shaykh Ayatollah al-Karbāsī, the *ḥawza*'s second founder, is head of its administration.[62]

Today the teaching staff numbers 27 professors, who teach courses in their own areas of specialization.[63] Among them are 21 professors with the title of Shaykh:[64] Muḥammad Al Rāḍī, Muḥammad 'Alī al-Fāḍilī, Muḥammad Riḍā al-Aḥmadī, Muḥammad al-Bāmiyānī, Kāẓim al-Khāqānī, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ayrawānī, Najāḥ al-Nuwayfī, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥā'irī, Ḥusayn al-Amīrī, Ḥusayn al-Sindī, Fāḍil al-Ṣaqqār, 'Alī al-Fidā'ī, Ḥusayn al-Najātī, Ḥasan al-Jawāhirī, 'Alī al-Khafājī, al-Firdān al-Baḥraynī, Muḥsin al-Muḥammadī, Aḥmad al-Ṣāfī, Aḥmad al-Sharīfī, 'Alī Al Muḥsin, and ṣādiq al-Najafī. In addition, there are four professors with the title of Sayyid:[65] Muṣṭafā al-Sāda, 'Adil al-'Alawī, Kamāl al-Ḥaydarī, and Riḍā al-Shīrāzī.

The Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* possesses a library with 817 books, including all the volumes which the institution's students need.[66] The full text of many of these books can be found on the library's website, which in this respect is unique among *ḥawza*s. There is also a video library with children's programmes such as *The Battle of al-Ṭaff* (Karbalā'), the play 'al-Ghadīr' (Ghadīr Khumm), lectures and sermons by Shī'ite clerics, and Islamic television series. The *ḥawza* library also has an audio section, with recitals of the Qur'ān, commentaries, lectures on ethics, sermonizing, proselytizing, pilgrimage to the imams' tombs, sermons, lamentation songs, discussions and stories.

Recently the *ḥawza* launched its own website: http://www.hawzaonline.com. To the best of our knowledge, it is the only *ḥawza* so far with its own website. The site contains information about the curriculum, activities, and the library's various sections. It is worth noting that many of the lessons taught at the *ḥawza* can be found on the site, providing an opportunity for outsiders to see what is taught there, and enabling students and others to pursue *ḥawza* studies.

In recent years Shī'ism has become ever more influential in Syria, and the number of people converting to Shī'ism has been on the rise. Numerous Iraqi Shī'ites have found refuge in Syria, after having been persecuted by the former Iraqi regime. In the wake of the oppression suffered by the students of the al-Najaf *ḥawza* under the

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previous Iraqi regime, many of them emigrated to Damascus where they established a temporary colony in the vicinity of the Lady Zaynab Shrine. When this came to the attention of Sayyid Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī he decided to establish a *ḥawza* there. After consulting with his two assistants the *ḥawza* was founded. However, shortly afterwards al-Shīrāzī was assassinated, and was replaced as head of the *ḥawza* by Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Karbāsī, who contributed greatly to its growth and development in the years 1985–89. Al-Karbāsī introduced new regulations which differed from those of other *ḥawza*s. One of these was to make Arabic the sole language of instruction, which made the *ḥawza* attractive to Shī'ites in the Arab world who did not speak Persian. He also defined the 17 subjects to be learned, chose the textbooks, added a day of rest from studies on the anniversary of the death of the *ḥawza*'s founder Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī, streamlined the institution's finances, arranged for students from abroad to be given residence visas by the Syrian authorities, provided graduates with diplomas and sought positions for them, formulated regulations for the dormitories and for student attendance, as well as regulations for the determination of the stipends to be paid to married and unmarried students, and administrative regulations, in addition to involving the *ḥawza* in various other activities. His innovations made the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* into a model for Shī'ite *ḥawza*s the world over. Delegations from other *ḥawza*s visit it in order to learn how it is run and emulate its ways. This naturally has had the effect of increasing the number of applications to study there. It is quite likely that the Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* will retain its leading position and develop further, at least as long as the security situation in post-Saddam Iraq continues to be unstable, and the *ḥawza* in al-Najaf still unsafe. The Zaynabiyya *ḥawza* in such a case will continue to be the preferred institution of Shī'ite education for those who prefer to study in Arabic.

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Notes

1. For more on this period see E. Kohlberg, 'Imām and Community in the Pre-Ghaiba Period' in A.S. Amir (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shī'ism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p.34.
2. The 'minor occultation' lasted for 67 years, from 874 to 941 CE. For more details see, for example: A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp.85ff.
3. 'A. al-Ḥ. al-Ṣāliḥī, 'Ma'ālim jāmi'atay al-Najaf al-ashraf wa-Karbalā' al-Muqaddasa' [The Features of the Two Colleges of al-Najaf and Karbalā'], in *Al-Najaf al-Ashraf ishāmāt fī al-ḥaḍāra al-insāniyya*) [Al-Najaf, Contributions to Human Civilization] (London: Markaz Karbalā' lil-buḥūth wal-dirāsāt, al-Markaz al-islāmī fī ingiltirā, 2000), pp.599–40.
4. For more on the Safavids see R.E. Darley-Doran, 'Safawids', *EI*, Vol.8, (1995), pp.765–93.
5. F. al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil* [Iran from the Inside] (Cairo, Markaz al-ahrām, 4th printing, 1991), pp.57–8; A.S. Amir, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.109.
6. However, historical sources do mention one clash during the period in question, which they describe as the first confrontation in modern Shī'ite history between clerics and the authorities and the first test of Shī'ite power. The incident in question took place during the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (the Great) (ruled 1587–1629 CE). The cleric Mullā Aḥmad Ardibillī had a quarrel with the Shah during which he told him that his authority was neither of divine origin nor due to his family's talents; rather, he served as the viceroy of the 'hidden imam', and if he violated the trust placed in him, the clerics had the right to remove him from his position. For details see H. Algar, *The Roots of the Islamic Revolution* (London: Open Press, 1983), p.15.
7. For details about the Qajar dynasty see A.K.S. Lambton, 'Kādjār', *EI*, Vol.4 (1997), pp.387–99.

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8. For more detail about the *ikhbāriyya* school see E. Kohlberg, 'Akbāriya', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol.1 (1985), pp.716–18; E. Kohlberg, 'Aspects of Akhbarī Thought in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in N. Levtzion and J.O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp.133–60; W. Madelung, 'Akhbāriyya', *EI* (1980) Supplement, 56–7; H. Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp.7ff, 19, 33–6, 64–6; G. Scarcia, 'Intorno alle controversie tra Aḫbārī e Uṣūlī Presso gli Imamiti di Persia', *Rivista delgi Studi Orientali*, Vol.33 (1958), pp.211–50.
9. For details see N. Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran', in N. Keddie (ed.), *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p.223. For more on the dispute between the two schools and on the significance of the *ikhbāriyya* victory see Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, pp. 1–25; Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama's Power', pp.211–30; L. Binder, 'The Proofs of Islam: Religion and Politics in Iran', in G. Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A.R. Gibb* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1965), pp.118–14; D. Menashrie, *Iran in Revolution* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1988), pp.44–5 (Hebrew).
10. Ḥ. Maḥmūd, 'Fikrat Ayat Allāh al-'uẓmā' [The Thought of the Great Ayatollah], http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/famous/2004/08/article02a.SHTML.
11. For more detail on the concept of emulation among Shī'ites see L. Clarke, 'The Shī'ī Construction of Taqlīd', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol.12, No.1 (2001), pp.40–64.
12. For details see Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama's Power', p.223.
13. E.W. Lane, *An Arabic–English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1865), II, p.667, S.V. 'Ḥ.W.Z.'; Ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī (Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makram), *Lisān al-'Arab* [Tongue of the Arabs Dictionary] (Beirut: Dār Ṣadir, 1990), 5, pp.341–2, s.v. ḤWZ; al-Huwaydī, *Īrān min al-dākhil* [Iran from the Inside], p.112.
14. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya* [Ḥawzas in the Lands of Islam] (Beirut: Bayt al-'ilm lil-nābihīn, 1st printing, 2004), pp.21–2; Markaz al-takhṭīṭ wal-manāhij al-dirāsiyya [Centre for Planning and Curricula] (ed.), *al-Ḥawza al-'ilmiyya fI fikr al-imām al-Khāmina'ī*[The Ḥawza in the Thought of the Imām al-Khāmina'ī] (Beirut: Ma'had al-rasūl al-akram al-'ālī lil-sharī'a al-islāmiyya, 1st printing, 2002), p.18.
15. There are a number of reasons why Shī'ite religious leaders established *ḥawza*s next to the shrines of imāms and prominent religious scholars. These locations were considered auspicious and believed to afford protection; founders of *ḥawza*s also took into consideration the fact that the shrines were visited by many pilgrims, and that this way *ḥawza* students and the Shī'ite masses would come into closer contact; there are also those who believe that the proximity of *ḥawza*s to shrines imparted a popular rather than an elitist character to the learning there (although the character of the more advanced stages of *ḥawza* instruction is quite rarefied); furthermore, the very existence of a *ḥawza* next to a shrine causes visitors to the shrine to take counsel with the clerics there in the course of performing the pilgrimage ceremonies. For more details see Ghasān bin Jiddu, 'Madīnat Qumm' [The City of Qumm], programme broadcast on *al-Jazeera television*, 10 Jan. 2005, and again on 5 Feb. 2005; see website http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres.
16. See 'A. al-Bahādilī, 'al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya ladā al-muslimīn al-shī'a' [The Shī'ite *ḥawza*s], *al-'Irfān*, Vol.80, No.3–4 (1996), p.124.
17. See International Religious Freedom Report 2006, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/.
18. S. al-D. Ibrāhīm, *Denominations, Sects and Ethnic Groups*, the eighth annual report, 2005, Cairo, the Ibn Khaldūn Centre for Developmental Studies, p.141, http://www.eicds.org/arabic/publicationsAR/reports/2005-min-AR.doc.
19. See, for example, the following website: http://www.arabic.cnn.com/2007/middle_east/4/2/shiite~/syria/index.htm1.
20. The neighbourhood is named for the cleric Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn al-Ḥusaynī al-'Āmilī (1284–1371 CE), who was born in the town of Shaqrā' in southern Lebanon and was laid to rest near the Lady Zaynab Shrine in recognition of his intellectual merits. For more details see http://www.al-shia.com/html/ara/ola/index.php?mod=rezvan&id=115.
21. She is called 'great', to distinguish her from other women who were named for her. For more details see Ḥ. al-Ṣaffār, *al-Mar'a al-'aẓīma: qirā'a fī ḥayāt al-sayyida Zaynab bint 'Alī 'alayhā al-salām* [The Great Woman: Readings in the Life of Lady Zaynab Daughter of 'Alī May She Rest in Peace] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-sayyid Zaynab ('alayhā al-salām) al-khayriyya, 1993), pp. 280–84;

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F. al-'Umrān, *Wafāt Zaynab al-kubrā* [*Death of the Great Zaynab*] (Kuwait: Maktabat al-alfayn, 1986), p.65; M.Ḥ. al-Sābiqī, *Marqad al-'aqīla Zaynab* [Tomb of Zaynab the Wife] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī, 1979), p.109.

22. Located in al-Ghūṭa, south of Damascus, today known as 'Village of the Lady', about seven km from the city. Zaynab's shrine is west of the village. For more details see http://www.imamreza.net/arb/imamreza.php?id=1925.
23. For more on the Zaynab *ḥawza* see its website, http://www.alhawzaonline.com.
24. Al Ḥ.'A. al-Safīr, *Taḥdhīr al-barriyya min nashāṭ al-shī' a fī sūriyya* (Cairo: Dār al-muḥaddithīn, 2007), p.22.
25. For details see http://www.malkiya.net/vb/showthread.php?t=5085.
26. For details see A. Arazi, 'Sukaynā bint al-Ḥusayn', *EI*,Vol.IV (1960), pp.802a–3b.
27. For details see http://www.14masom.com/astetlaa/19/19.htm=6.
28. For more details see 'Abd al-Satīr al Ḥusayn, *taḥdhīr al-bariyya nim shī'at sūriyyā* (Cairo: Dār al-Muḥaddithīn, 2007), pp.32–63.
29. The city of al-Raqqa is a city with about 300,000 inhabitants in the north-central part of Syria. It is the capital of a province of the same name, located on the north bank of the Euphrates, some 160 km east of Aleppo.
30. The term 'source of emulation' in Shī'ite usage refers to senior clerics who have the right to render independent judicial judgments. This class of religious scholars among Twelver Shī'ites came into being in the nineteenth century CE in Iran. The idea of a class of such 'sources of emulation' has developed in Shī'ite sources despite the fact that it has no roots in early Shī'ite thought. The concept of the awaited imam may have played a role in the emergence of the 'source of emulation' in later Shī'ite religious jurisprudence. The idea of a 'source of emulation', which has gradually developed into an integral part of the juridical system may also be associated with two contributing factors. The first of these factors is the victory of the legalistic over the innovative school of Shī'ite jurists. Senior adherents of the former school played a significant role in the establishment of the institution in later Shī'ism; they disseminated the view that the most knowledgeable juridical scholar deserves the title of 'viceroy of the occulted imam', and should be imitated by those obligated to observe the precepts of religion. Among the Shī'ite jurists who promoted this idea we may mention Shaykh al-Anṣārī (1281/1864) and Shaykh al-Ṭabāṭibā'ī al-Yazdī (1338/1920), among others. The second contributing factor was the theory of 'loyalty to a religious jurist' (*wilāyat al-faqīh*), which required adherence to the most knowledgeable scholar and obedience to his judgments. One of the main promoters of this idea was Shaykh Mullā al-Narāqī (1245/1830).

    It took some time, however, for the concept of 'source of emulation' to become firmly entrenched in its mature form. This it did thanks to the efforts of a group of scholars in the nineteenth century, whom Twelver Shī'ites accepted as 'sources of emulation' with no hesitation, among them al-Waḥīd al-Bahbahānī, al-Sayyid Mahdī Baḥr al-'Ulūm, al-Shaykh Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', Jawād al-'Amilī, al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-A'rajī, al-Mīrzā al-Qummī, and others. For more details see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shī'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shī'ism* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp.140–46, 248–78; A.K. Moussavi, 'The Establishment of the Position of Marja'iat al-Taqlid in the Twelver Shī'ite Community', *Iranian Studies*, Vol.18 (1985), pp.35–51; L. Clarke, 'The Shī'ī Construction of Taqlīd', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol.12, No.1 (2001), pp.40–64.
31. See 'Religious Leaders Reject the Dissemination of Iranian Shī'ism in Syria', http://www.aljaml.com/node/9168.
32. A. al-Ayyūbī, 'The Iranian Incursion into Syria under the Auspices of the Asads', 19 Nov. 2007, http://www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh005.htm.
33. 'Abd al-Satīr al-Ḥusayn, *op.cit*., p.66.
34. M. al-Ḥasnāwī, 'Iranian Influence in Syria', 13 Oct. 2005, http://www.arraee.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=6680.
35. U. Ḥasan, 'On Conversion to Sunnism and Shī'ism in Syria: An Answer to the Wahhābīs and Those Who Imitate Their Ways', http://www.aljaml.com/node/11387.
36. 'Conversion to Shī'ism in Syria: Various Bodies Try to Disseminate Shī'ism among the Kurds in Syria', http://www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh019.htm
37. M. al-Ḥasnāwī, 'Iranian Influence in Syria', 13 Oct. 2005, http://www.arraee.com.
38. A. Nickmeyer, 'A Wave of Conversion from Sunnism to Shī'ism in Syria, Due to Admiration for Naṣr Allāh', 19 Nov. 2007, http://www.m-alhuda.com/showthread.php?t=665. See also

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A. al-Ayyūbī, 'Iran Penetrates the Arab World: Facts and Figures, Dimensions and Indications', 19 Nov. 2007, http://www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh012.htm.

39. 'Clerics Deny That Iran Disseminates Shī'ism in Syria', *al-'Arabiyya*, 19 Nov. 2007, http://www.aljaml.com/node/9168.
40. See, for example, what the Syrian expert on minorities Nabīl Fayyāḍ says in the article mentioned in the note above.
41. 'Shī'ism in Syria: Religious Rights Preserved in an Oppressed Society', http://www.arabic.cnn.com/2007/middle_east/4/2/shiite.syria/index.html.
42. She is called 'the Great' to distinguish her from other women with the same name. For more details on her see Ḥ. al-ṣaffār, 'al-Mar'a al-'aẓīma: qirā'a fī ḥayāt al-sayyida Zaynab bint 'Alī 'alayhimā al-salām' [The Great Woman: Readings in the Biography of Lady Zaynab Daughter of 'Alī, May Both Rest in Peace] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-sayyida Zaynab al-khayriyya, 1993), pp.280–84; F. al-'Imrān, *Wafāt Zaynab al-kubrā* [The Death of Zaynab the Great] (Kuwait: Maktabat al-alfayn, 1986), p.65; M.Ḥ. al-Sābiqī, *Marqad al-'aqīla Zaynab* [The Resting-Place of Zaynab the Wife] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-a'lamī, 1979), p.109.
43. 'Abd al-Ḥ. al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya [Ḥawza*s in Muslim Lands] (Beirut: Bayt al-'ilm lil-nābihīn, 2004), p.191.
44. For details on him see ibid., pp.215–17; http://www.alshirazi.net.
45. Ibid., pp.195–9.
46. Ibid., pp.226–7.
47. See 'Interview with Shaykh Maḥmūd Sayf', http://www.alshirazi.net/leqaat/leghaat/legha/shahid/020.htm.48.
48. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya*, p.223.
49. Ibid., p.227.
50. See the *ḥawza*'s website, http://www.alhawzaonline.com. For a comparison with the stages of instruction at the Najaf and Qumm *ḥawza*s, see K. Sindawi, 'Hawza Instruction and Its Role in Shaping Modern Shī'ite Identity, The Hawza of al-Najaf and Qumm as a Case Study', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.43, No.6 (2007), pp.839ff.
51. For more on this certificate seeibid., p.845.
52. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya*, pp.231–2.
53. Cf. the subjects taught at the Najaf and Qumm *ḥawza*s in Sindawi, 'Hawza Instruction and Shī'ite Identity', p.839ff.
54. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya*, pp.229–31.
55. Cf. the holidays and breaks in the *ḥawza*s of al-Najaf and Qumm, in Sindawi, 'Hawza Instruction and Shī'ite Identity', p.837.
56. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya*, pp.233–4.
57. Ibid., pp.232–3.
58. Ibid., pp.234–8.
59. Ibid., pp.237–8.
60. For more on the financing of *ḥawza*s in general, see ibid., p.225; Sindawi, 'Hawza Instruction and Shī'ite Identity', pp.838–9.
61. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Ḥawzāt al-'ilmiyya fī al-aqṭār al-islāmiyya*, pp.233–4.
62. Ibid., pp.239–40.
63. See the *ḥawza*'s website, http://www.hawzaonline.com.
64. This is the title of someone who is not a descendant of the Prophet by the father. He wears a white turban. For more details see Sindawi, 'Hawza Instruction and Shī'ite Identity', p.843, note 69.
65. Sayyid is the title of a person who is descended from the Prophet through the father. He wears a black turban, like the Prophet's turban *al-saḥāb* (literally: 'cloud'), which was made of black silk and named so because it evoked dark rain clouds. It was passed on to 'Alī and then inherited in turn by the 12 imams. For more details see Sindawi, 'Hawza Instruction and Shī'ite Identity', p.843, note 69.
66. See the *ḥawza*'s website, http://www.hawzaonline.com.

The Shiite Turn in Syria

By Khalid Sindawi

Syria has never had a large Shiite population, but in recent years there has been an increase in conversions to Shiism within Syria's Sunni, Ismaili, and Alawite populations. The geographical proximity of Iran to Syria has always led to a certain degree of Iranian influence there, which increased with Bashar al-Asad's succession to power in 2000 after the death of his father Hafiz. The Syrian government's encouragement of Iranian missionary activity may be the chief cause of the increase in conversions, but it is not the only one. The existence of an indigenous Shiite population and of historic Shiite shrines in various parts of Syria, the nature of Shiite worship, the media's power, the perceived victory of Hizbullah in the Lebanon war of 2006, the strategic wooing of influential Syrians, economic and educational inducements to the less affluent, and the dominance of the Alawite sect in politics are other factors that must be considered.

Accurate statistics about the various religious groups in Syria are not easy to come by because of the Alawite regime's sensitivity in matters of this kind. The *International Religious Freedom Report* for 2006, published by the U.S. State Department, notes that Alawites, Ismailis, and other Shiites constitute thirteen percent of Syria's population, or about 2.2 million people out of a total population of 18 million.[1]

Another report, *Religious Communities, Creeds and Ethnic Groups*, published in 2005 by the Ibn Khaldun Center for Developmental Studies in Cairo, states that Shiites constitute one percent of Syria's population,[2] while the percentage of Alawites is between eight and nine. Shiite internet websites claim that Syria's Shiites comprise two percent of that country's population.[3]

In addition to its indigenous Shiites, Syria also hosts a community of Iranian

Shiite émigrés who reside mainly in Damascus, as well as a large number of Iraqi Shiites who arrived during the 1970s and 1980s as a result of the oppressive policies of the former Iraqi regime. The population of Iraqi Shiites grew still further in the wake of the invasion of Iraq in 2003.[4]

In general there is no social discrimination against Shiites in Syria. They are socially integrated and intermarry with other Muslim groups. The small number of Shiites in Syria may explain in part why they have not developed the kind of sectarian particularism seen in other countries in the region. Shiites live in most of Syria's provinces, although the highest proportion lives in Tartus, a province that accounts for 44 percent of the country's Shiite population. Some Shiites have attained high positions in Syria, among them Mahdi Dakhl Allah, a former Minister of Information, and Saib Nahhas, a prominent businessman. The best-known Shiite families in the country include the Nizam, Murtada, Baydun and al-Rumani families.

The Shiites in Syria do not obey a single "source of emulation" (*marja taqlid*).[5] Some are followers of the Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf, Iraq; others are devoted to the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the highest religious authority in Iran; still others follow Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah in Lebanon.

The Alawite Factor

What explains the relatively favorable treatment of Shiites in Syria? Their positive status existed even before the advent of the Bashar al-Asad government, which has taken a more openly favorable stance towards Iran and Shiism. Since 1963, Syria has been ruled by a regime that belongs to the Alawite sect, which has affinities with Shiism. The ruling Baath Party has always realized its precarious position, and its predominant Alawite membership tries to maintain a balance between having their claim of belonging to Twelver Shiism recognized, while not losing their ethnic and cultural identity as well as their secret religious doctrines.[6] The party has therefore pursued policies aimed at legitimizing the Alawite creed, which has played a significant role in formulating Syrian policy toward Shiites.

One outcome of Alawite political dominance has been the importance that Syria attaches to its relations with the Shiites of Lebanon and Iran. These relations have from time to time been strengthened thanks to close personal ties with Lebanon's Shiite leaders. This was especially true of Musa al-Sadr at the beginning of the 1970s. Syria also gave special concessions to leaders of the Iranian opposition.[7]

Under Syria's one-party political system, the law forbids the establishment of political parties whose ideology is at variance with that of the ruling party. Syria's autocratic regime has insisted on keeping religion out of politics as the Muslim

Brotherhood found out to its great consternation on February 2, 1982, when they rebelled against the Syrian government. The Syrian government arrested 20,000 political prisoners among the Muslim Brotherhood and killed 10,000 people; 600,000 were blacklisted.[8] This helps to explain why the Shiites have not developed any political organizations of their own, but have kept their distance from politics and restricted themselves to religious matters.[9] Shiite religious rights are maintained, and despite the regime's secular ideology, it takes care to ensure the loyalty of the country's various religious establishments, perhaps to compensate for its general lack of popular support.

Survey Results

A pioneering study funded by the European Union and conducted by field workers in the first six months of 2006 provides useful data on the Syrian religious landscape.[10] It indicates that the provinces with an Alawi majority had a higher percentage of converts to Shiism than other provinces. According to this study, the numerical distribution of conversions to Shiism among Alawites in the various provinces is as follows: Tartus 44%, Latakiya 26%, Hims 14%, Hama and Damascus 16%. Among Sunnis the percentages are as follows: Aleppo 46%, Damascus 23%, Hims 22%, Hama 5% and Idlib 4%. The number of converts in the provinces of Deir al-Zor, al-Raqqa and al-Qunaytara is too small to be significant. Among Ismailis the percentages of conversions in the various provinces are as follows: Hama 51%, Tartus 43%, Aleppo 3%, Damascus 2%, Idlib 1%.

The rate of conversion of Sunnis to Shiism is very low, 2% overall. Perhaps not surprisingly, some 7% of the Sunni Muslims who converted in the Damascus area belong to families that had originally been Shiite but became Sunnis in the course of time, such as the al-Attar, Qassab, Hasan, al-Lahham, Bikhtiyar and Ikhtiyar families. In Aleppo, 88% of converts to Shiism are said to come from such originally Shiite families.

According to the EU study, the known cases of Sunni conversion to Shiism cannot be ascribed to standard social or economic causes in any of the denominations. In Damascus, for instance, 64.4% of converts to Shiism belong to families of middle- to high-income merchants and professionals. The great majority (69%) have at least a high school education. In Aleppo, too, it was found that 61% of the converts came from the middle or upper classes. Among the poor, 39% of the converts belong to former Shiite families (they thus "renewed" their Shiite affiliation); their conversion thus probably had religious grounds. Among Sunnis the proportion of converts for financial reasons (in all the provinces included in the study) was a mere 3%.

According to the study, conversions rarely took place for mercenary reasons, apart from a few Sunni converts, especially university students, said they were not religious at all, but decided to convert "in order to obtain enough money to finish their studies or to marry, despite the fact that neither the Sunni nor the Shiite creed meant anything to them." Another finding among Sunni converts, especially those who converted after the war in Lebanon in 2006, was that they claimed to have done so "out of love for Hezbollah and Hasan Nasrallah."

As for Alawite converts in all the Syrian provinces, the study found that,unlike Sunni converts, the great majority (about 76%) were students or unemployed. Some military people have converted as well; this information came from an Alawite cleric in Tartus, since official information about military personnel is not easy to come by. Ismaili converts, like Sunni converts, overwhelmingly (84%) come from middle- to upper-class families.[11]

The European Union's study arrived at the following conclusions concerning conversion to Shiism in Syria, the last of which in particular might be worrisome news for the Alawite-dominated regime:

1. Most cases of conversion, in the past as well as in the present, occur among families that have traditional Shiite leanings (Ismailis, Alawites), not among the Sunni population.[12]

2. The low rate of conversion among Sunnis suggests that in fact no missionary activity has been taking place among them, especially in light of the fact that some Sunni converts belong to formerly Shiite families that had adopted the Sunni creed at one time or another.

3. The percentage of conversion for economic or financial gain is so low that "conversion for mercenary reasons" can be ruled out as a trend. (Apparently the result of this study does not reflect all those who converted to Shiism. Other studies indicate that a large percentage of the new Shiites in Syria converted for reasons of financial gain.)[13]

4. If the current rate of conversions among Ismailis and Alawites continues unabated, the former sect will die out within ten years and the latter within a quarter of a century.[14]

As we shall see, substantial anecdotal evidence from various provinces of Syria calls into question the second and third conclusions above, regarding the lack of missionary activity and mercenary conversions.

Syria's Shiite Shrines

Several internationally important Shiite shrines serve as anchors for the Shiite population in Syria as well as attracting visitors from abroad. The shrines are financially self-supporting and belong to the Ministry of Religious Endowments. However, Iran has taken the opportunity to extend its influence into Syria by financing development in some of these locations.

Native Syrian Shiites live mostly in various neighborhoods of the capital itself, as well as in a few towns and villages in the provinces of Hims and Hama.[15] Most Iraqi Shiites in Syria reside in the Sayyida Zaynab region to the south of the capital Damascus, an area that has grown up around one of the main shrines of Shiism, the tomb of Zaynab the Great[16] daughter of Ali b. Abi Talib.[17] Zaynab's tomb, which is used for lectures and religious celebrations, as well as for the dissemination of Shiite religious literature,[18] is the largest Shiite center in Syria. In addition, numerous Iranian tourists visit the shrine. The number of pilgrims, which stood at 27,000 in the year 1978, rose to 202,000 in 2003. This increase in visits has also brought about an increase in Iranian influence in Syria.[19]

The shrine of Sayyida Ruqayya is the second most frequently visited Shiite shrine in Syria.[20] Due to its central location inside the capital, it draws large crowds for the daily public prayers and the weekly Friday prayer. The shrine's imam, Shaykh Nabil al-Halbawi, is one of the most prominent Shiite personalities in Syria.

At times the presence of Shiite shrines in Syria has led to Iranian involvement and has resulted in friction. At the beginning of the 1990s at the shrine of Sayyida Sukayna,[21] located in the Small Gate (*al-Bab al-Saghir*) cemetery in Damascus,[22] the Iranians constructed a large tomb over the old one. They purchased the land around it for a courtyard that would be capable of holding the hundreds, and later thousands, of Iranian pilgrims who began visiting the site, now called Sayyida Sukayna, Daughter of our Master Ali b. Abi Talib, Peace Be On Him. After having purchased the land, the Iranians also began constructing a very large *husayniyya* (Shiite house of prayer) at the grave site.

The large building in Darayya, located very close to Damascus, is still under construction, but already shops and residential buildings have arisen around it, as well as hotels, in preparation for the establishment of a Shiite center in the city of Darayya. Senior Iranian leaders visit the site and express their support for the project. The latest among these was Iran's Prime Minister Ahmadinejad, who arrived there on his latest visit to Syria, on January 20 2006.

The town's residents were aware of the Iranian plans for their city and protested

to the mayor, who was favorably disposed towards the residents. However, the Syrian regime, and especially its security agencies, took a harsh stand, fired the sympathetic mayor, and installed another one. The new mayor informed the townspeople that he could do nothing since the security forces had threatened dire consequences for the entire town if its residents continued to protest against the Iranian project. The signs on the shrine and the shops are all in both Arabic and Persian. As a result of the area's development, land prices and the rent of shops have skyrocketed.[23]

Prior History of Shiism in Syria

Shiism has a long history in Syria. It can be traced back to the seventh century CE, although it became prevalent there only in the tenth century CE. The Shiite creed continued to spread during the ascendancy of the Ismaili Shiite Fatimid dynasty (969-1172 CE), which ruled over Egypt and extended its control to Syria as well during the eleventh century CE. Subsequently, however, Shiism in Syria began to wane due to the animosity of the Ayyubid dynasty (1171-1250 CE) and later of the Ottomans (1517-1798 CE). By early modern times the adherents of Twelver Shiism in Syria had become a small minority.

The first prominent modern Shiite to have engaged in converting others to Shiism in Syria was the scholar Abd al-Rahman Khayr (b.1925). However, conversion did not take place in significant numbers before the activities of Jamil al-Asad, brother of the late Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad, in the 1980s.

The beginnings of the trend to conversion can be traced back to a visit that Musa al-Sadr made in 1974 to the elders of the Alawite community in the Latakia Mountains in the coastal area of the country. He was preceded by the Ayatollah al-Shirazi, who produced the well-known ruling according to which the people of that region were to be considered Twelver Shiites.[24] Jamil al-Asad began to encourage conversion to Shiism in this same region, especially among members of the Alawite community. He sent groups of Alawites to study Twelver Shiism in Iran, and upon their return to Syria they disseminated the Shiite creed among their fellow Alawites. Al-Asad built husayniyyas in the mountains, where before there had been only Alawite shrines. In order to make Shiism more acceptable to the people there he appointed a Shiite shaykh to head the Alawite al-Zahra Mosque in the city of Baniyas on the Syrian coast.[25]

After Hafiz al-Asad came to power in 1970, some Sunni religious leaders expressed their opposition to him because of his Alawite religious affiliation. In order to ingratiate himself with them, al-Asad began attending services in mosques and gave dinner parties during the month of Ramadan for religious leaders following their fast.

He also had his brother Jamil set up the Alawite al-Murtada Association, with branches all over Syria. Hafiz al-Asad established the al-Murtada Association in order to show that the Alawites belonged to the larger community of Shiites so that they would not remain a minority.[26]

After some in-depth research, Hafiz al-Asad asked the Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah to work in Syria. He opened an office in the Sayyida Zaynab neighborhood of Damascus, and later Syrian television began broadcasting programs with the Iraqi Shiite Shaykh Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir. However, after Bashar al-Asad came to power in the year 2000, Fadlallah's influence waned somewhat; his place was taken by the Iranian embassy, working through its cultural attaché in Aleppo.

Although the late Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad maintained a strategic alliance with Iran, he did not permit the principles of the Iranian Revolution to gain a foothold in Syria. In fact, he systematically and firmly restrained the Iranian presence, and occasionally went so far as to close down institutions funded by Iran, including clinics. The Iranians attempted to gain entry into areas populated by Alawites by exploiting their religious affinities with them, but the Syrian president took a number of steps both inside and outside the Alawite community to ensure that the Iranian attempt to infiltrate the Syrian heartland did not succeed. The president also ordered the Mufti of Syria, Ahmad Kaftaru, to establish schools for Quranic study throughout Syria, including in predominantly Alawite regions of the country. These schools are called "al-Asad Institutes for Memorizing the Quran." He also forbade sending students to study religion in Iran.

Increasing Iranian Influence in Syria

When Bashar al-Asad became president, the balance his father had established began to shift in favor of Iranian influence and Shiism. Campaigns were instituted among ordinary Syrians to encourage them to convert to Shiism. Numerous sources have accused Dr. Ahmad Badr al-Din al-Hassun, Syria's Chief Mufti, of having secretly converted to Shiism. Many such accusations were heard in the wake of his sermon on last year's Ashura Day. In that sermon he made many statements sympathetic to Shiite doctrine, accusing all the Muslim caliphs, from Muawiya onward, of unbelief, and stating that Ali was God's proof for His creatures and that the existence of the Prophet's family ensured justice and peace in the world.[27]

It should be noted, however, that the Islamist Syrian Member of Parliament Muhammad Habash, head of the Islamic Studies Center in Damascus, has denied the recent allegations that have appeared on websites and in the Arab press declaring the Chief Mufti's secret conversion to Shiism.[28]

Under Bashar al-Asad's rule a number of changes have occurred in official propaganda, as reflected in the local and satellite television channels and radio stations available in Syria. Syrians have access to foreign networks like al-Manar, which broadcasts from Lebanon and promotes conversion to Shiism in Syria and elsewhere. There are also a number of local channels that broadcast Shiite traditions, pictures, lectures, and Quranic exegesis and openly carry missionary content. Syrian television gives a weekly (at least) hour-long broadcast slot to the Shiite missionary Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir. It also gives broadcast time to the Iraqi Abd al-Zahra, especially during the month of Ramadan, when he reads Quranic verses followed by songs and hymns in praise of the Prophet's family. Another source of Shiite material is an FM radio station that broadcasts ideological and political messages similar to those of the Hezbollah radio stations in Lebanon and those belonging to the Supreme Council of the Iranian Revolution in Iraq.

The Asad regime promotes the media appearance of pro-Iranian shaykhs at the expense of Sunni notables. These Shiite clerics use the official media to give lessons whose content is liable to arouse conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites (an example being their attitude towards the Prophet's Companions). The positions they have taken have been met with very sharp reactions, especially in Damascus but in other areas as well, such as Aleppo and its environs.

Today there are reportedly more than five hundred husayniyyas under construction in Syria; according to other sources, this number refers just to Damascus. In addition, the regime has naturalized Iranians and pro-Iranian Iraqi Shiites. According to some sources, twenty thousand Iranians have been given Syrian citizenship.[29] This, however, has been disputed by Syrian Sunni clerics.[30]

While the Syrian regime has granted Syrian citizenship to tens of thousands of Iranians, it has been denying citizenship to native Syrian Kurds for forty years. The Syrian regime also supports Iran in its repression of the Bedouins of Ahwaz in Iran (although they are Shiites, too). In October 2007 newspaper reports claimed that the Syrian regime had turned over to the Teheran government a number of Ahwazis who oppose the Iranian regime.

Observers point out that the close relations between Syria and Iran, especially since their strategic alliance in 1980, have enabled Iran to operate in Syrian territory. Thus senior Syrian and Iranian officials attend the various celebrations organized by the chancellery in Damascus on Iranian national holidays, such as the annual celebration in honor of the Iranian Revolution, and religious holidays, such as the death of Husayn on the day of Ashura.[31]

Tribal heads, especially in the al-Raqqa area, are invited by the Iranian ambassador to visit Iran free of charge, as are other notables in Syria, including professors at religious colleges. One such trip was made by a group of tribal leaders headed by

Hamid al-Jarba, the shaykh of the Shamr tribe, Faysal al-Arif, the shaykh of the Khafaja tribe, and Awwad al Awamleh, the shaykh of the al-Wahb tribe from the town of al-Buwayhij. Such visitors come back to Syria laden with presents and with bulging pockets.[32]

Financial inducements play a notable role in Iranian promotion of Shiism. Poor people, for instance, are given loans in the name of Muslim solidarity, and eventually are told they do not have to pay it back.[33] Similarly, free medical care is provided in Iranian charity hospitals in Syria, such as the Imam Khomeini Hospital in Damascus and the Red Crescent Hospital and the Charity Hospital in Aleppo.

Syrian and Iranian Shiite missionaries sometimes offer cash to people, or offer to help them in their commercial or official dealings. Such inducements are usually offered to notables and heads of clans, especially in the area between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, where this method is merely a continuation of the Iraqi system for controlling the people through the heads of tribes and clans. Another way to encourage converts is by providing them with a wife, or with basic necessities such as oil, sugar, rice, and butter.

The Asad regime has also imported a special Iranian militia whose task is to protect the government. The militia is composed of about three thousand Iranian troops as well as a number of units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard that specialize in urban warfare. These troops operate alongside the Syrian Republican Guard, headed by Mahir al-Asad.[34]

According to a number of sources,[35] those who display opposition to the wave of religious and political missionary work carried out by Iranian organizations—which is felt especially strongly in the Syrian province of al-Raqqa—and those who dare express disapproval of the fact that some poverty-stricken members of Bedouin tribes were converted to Shiism, claim that many of the Bedouin tribes converted to Shiism for financial motives. These critics attest that the Syrian government and Iranian missionary activity took advantage of the Bedouin's poverty to convert them to Shiism . In the al-Raqqa province, the opponents were liable to be arrested by Syrian security forces and accused of being Wahhabis or fundamentalists.

The Role of Education

Education is another tool used by the Asad government to promote Shiism and ties with Iran. For example, at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, a Shiite religious college was opened in the town of al-Tabaqa, with an enrollment of more than two hundred students. The Shiites had no trouble receiving a permit to open this college, although in the entire country there are only two Sunni

religious colleges, one in Damascus and the other in Aleppo. The latter had to wait decades for approval, which finally came in 2007. Recently it was reported that Iran has received permission from the Syrian authorities to establish a large Iranian university with numerous faculties.[36]

Scholarships are made available for study at Qum and Teheran, especially for advanced students chosen for their academic or social background. These institutions give preferential treatment to students who support the authorities. Such students are then given jobs, as happened with Syria's Chief Mufti, Ahmad al-Hassun, and others. Some students are permitted to study at the *hawza* (Shiite seminary)[37] of the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, where they do not pay tuition and are provided with a monthly, unconditional stipend. Lending libraries, called "stores" (*hawanit*) have been opened by the Iranians in all the Shiite centers in Syria. The libraries also distribute books free of charge and give prizes (of 1,000 Syrian pounds per book) to readers.[38]

All of these measures encourage the study of Shiism. The Syrian Ministry of Education may have overreached, however, when it issued a ban on primary-school education in Sunni religious institutions of learning. Sunni religious scholars, and especially the Association of Ulema in Syria, declared this to be an oppressive step. At first, despite the tensions this step aroused within the Syrian cabinet, the regime did nothing to alleviate the situation. The Association of Ulema even met with President al-Asad himself to discuss the situation, but he refused to overturn his minister's decision. Ultimately, however, after the internal turmoil in Syria and the conflict between the Syrian Sunni leadership and the Iranian institutions came to a head, the Syrian regime decided to back off from its decision to abolish primary-school education in Sunni religious institutions of learning.[39]

The Effect of the Lebanon War of 2006 on Shiite Conversions in Syria

In thinking about Shiism in Syria it is impossible to ignore the role of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite organization with ideological and strategic ties to Iran. While Syria was in control of Lebanon it provided the organization with political and military support, and in return Hezbollah was Syria's main ally in Lebanon.

The thirty-three day war between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006 gave rise to a wave of admiration among Syrians for Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah and his organization because of their resistance against Israel. As a result, Shiism came to be seen in a more positive light, and more Syrian Sunnis converted to Shiism. Hezbollah's perceived achievements and victories in the war also brought about

an increase in Iranian activity. According to Mustafa al-Sada, a young Shiite cleric who came into contact with numerous Sunnis who showed an interest in adopting the Shiite creed, "George Bush did us a service and unified the Arabs." Al-Sada said that he knew seventy-five Sunnis in Damascus who had converted to Shiism since the beginning of hostilities in Lebanon in July 2007, and that the war gave additional impetus to the rising trend in recent years to adopt the Shiite creed.

Wail Khalil, for example, a twenty-one-year-old student of international law at Damascus University, says that "for the first time in my life I saw a war in which the Arabs were victorious." Subsequently Khalil, a Sunni, began to observe Shiite rites, and he plans to convert completely to Shiism.[40]

Since the war, pictures of Hasan Nasrallah and of Khamenei have been more widely displayed than the region's other political leaders. Anyone walking through the streets of Damascus today will see pictures of President Bashar al-Asad alongside the Hezbollah leader. These pictures are displayed on shop fronts, private cars, buses, and walls. Local Syrian intellectuals explain that these pictures express patriotism rather than sectarian religious feelings,[41] since Nasrallah has become more a national symbol than a religious one.[42]

Charges and Countercharges

In reaction to the increasing pace of conversion to Shiism in Syria and the Syrian government's indifference, the prominent Saudi religious propagandist Salman al-Awda, head of the Islam Today Institute, sounded a warning on October 22, 2006. He pointed out that "Shiite expansion among Sunnis constitutes playing with fire."[43] In statements to the press Awda declared that "Shiism is spreading apace in Syria especially, and in a number of other countries of the Muslim world as well. A part of this trend may be ascribed to political motives, in other words to show support for the Iranian political presence. But this does not mean that others do not confuse the political and ideological aspects."

Awda points to the various ways the Shiite creed is being disseminated in Syria: "Material inducements are used to convince people to adopt Shiism. As a result husayniyyas have proliferated, and all attempts to oppose this trend have been put down." Awda's declarations came after a number of Iranian organizations constructed two shrines, one over the grave of the Companion Ammar b. Yasir and the other over the grave of the *tabii'i* Uways al-Qarni in the northeastern province of al-Raqqa, where Iranian cultural offices were opened as well.[44]

Shiite clerics in Syria rebut Awda's accusations. The two most prominent Syrian Shiite religious leaders in Syria, Abdallah Nizam and Nabil Halbawi have denied

that any "Shiite missionary campaign" is taking place among Sunnis and have demanded that the accusers produce evidence for their claims.

A prominent religious leader of the Alawite community, Dhu al-Fiqar Ghazal, has also denied any efforts to convert Alawites to Shiism. In a lengthy talk on arabiyya.net[45] he spoke about the differences between Alawites and Shiites and stressed that the Syrian regime did not rule as an Alawite regime, and that the Alawites had gained their position thanks to the love of the people. He added that Syrians coexist well with each other and that the Alawite community is more open and secular than most, and willing to maintain dialogue with those who are different.

The Shiite cleric Abdallah Nizam, supervisor of Shiite institutions and shrines in Syria and a teacher at the Sayyida Zaynab hawza sent a letter of rebuke to Awda in which he said: "We wish to put al-Awda's mind at ease; there is no danger to the Sunni creed here, and we oppose people selling their faith."

Like Awda, former Syrian Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam, who opposes the present regime, accuses the Iranian ambassador in Damascus of engaging in missionary work in Syria. Khaddam claims "the Iranian ambassador in Damascus moves around Syria with greater freedom than its own Prime Minister."[46] In an interview with UPI, Khaddam declared that the Iranian ambassador exploited the poverty in the country by building shrines where Companions of the Prophet supposedly stayed and by giving money to the poor, with the objective of building an Iranian party within Syria by means of converting people to Shiism.

Other prominent Syrians have accused the Iranian cultural chancellery in Damascus of activities that are not consistent with its declared aims; that it promotes conversion to Shiism in Syria, and that it actually operates under Iran's Supreme Spiritual Leader Ali Khamenei, despite its official status as a part of the Iranian embassy.

Dr. Wahba al-Zuhayli, a well-known Syrian Islamic cleric and thinker, accused the chancellery of offering inducements in the form of cash, houses and cars in order to attract people to Shiism. He pointed out that "hundreds of Syrians in Deir al-Zor, al-Raqqa, Dar'a and the al-Ghuta region near Damascus have succumbed to the chancellery's inducements and converted to Shiism" (according to a newspaper report from October 31, 2006 on the news website belonging to the Middle East Center in London).

The Shiite conversions have also roiled Sunni Islamists. The head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni, told the Quds Press Agency that "the entire conversion to Shiism activity in Syria is just an attempt to create confusion so as to bring about a change in the social composition of Syrian society."

Conversion in Deir al-Zor

The wave of conversions to Shiism in the Deir al-Zor region can be traced to the town of Hatla, where ten percent of the total population of thirty thousand has embraced Shiism. The conversions began with Umar al-Hammadi, a sergeant major in the army who served in western and southern Syria and converted to Shiism in 1979 while stationed in Dar'a. He is reported to have worked closely with the Iranians, and in the same year he also convinced his cousin and brother-in-law, Yasin al-Ma'yuf, to embrace the Shiite creed. At that time these were the only two converts.

In 1982 the Imam al-Murtada Association, founded by Jamil al-Asad, invited Syrian notables and tribal chiefs to the Association's headquarters in al-Qardaha and asked for their cooperation with its missionary activities. Al-Mayuf was appointed head of the Association's Hatla branch. The association was very active and spent great sums of money, until it was closed down by Hafiz al-Asad in the mid-1980s. But before it was disbanded, Yasin Mayuf was put in contact with Iran. He became one of the students sent to that country. He and others, including Ibrahim al-Sayir, continued to receive money from the Iranian Cultural Chancellery in Damascus, the Sayyida Zaynab *hawza*, and from a number of Shiites from the Persian Gulf.

After Mayuf came back from Iran at the beginning of the 1990s, Shiite influence began to be felt in public. Even the call to prayer in the Hatla mosque now included the phrase "and Ali is the regent of Allah." Mayuf, who had become a very wealthy man thanks to Iranian support, used his money to induce people to convert to Shiism, either by way of direct payments, or by letting shops in a bazaar he owned for a paltry sum. Next to his home, Mayuf built a prayer hall where Ashura commemoration ceremonies were held.

Husayn al-Raja, a relative of Mayuf, as the chief Shiite missionary in the Deir al-Zor region, also has become a wealthy man.[47] He has reportedly hosted large banquets to which he invited tribal notables and many people from the village. He has filmed the events and sent the videotape, which purportedly features people that he has converted to Shiism, to Iran. For this he has received great sums of money. He is also said to film gatherings, such as weddings and popular festivals, sending the videos to Iran on the same pretext. In fact, he allegedly sent one of his men to film cars on the highway between al-Raqqa and Deir al-Zor, which he then claimed to belong to people whom he had converted to Shiism.[48] At present Raja gives a weekly sermon in al-Raqqa.

A number of intellectuals[49] in the Deir al-Zor region are also active in promoting conversion to Shiism. One of these is Amir Shabib, owner of a bookstore called the Venerable Quran Bookshop on Deir al-Zor's main square. Another is Abdallah Hamdan, whose father converted to Shiism first, followed by his son in 1990. He is a cousin of

Yasin al-Mayuf. At the time of writing he sells books on the Euphrates Bridge near the al-Saraya Mosque. He gives away books on Shiism, especially to women and girls. (Among the books which are given away there: *Twelver Shiism* and *The Prophet's Family* by Muhammad Jawad Mughniya, and *The Prophet's Family in Noah's Ark* by Munir Ali Khan.) He sells other books on installment in order to attract more customers.

In the Deir al-Zor region, in the town of Hatla and its neighboring villages, at least six husayniyyas have been built recently.[50] Numerous husayniyyas can also be found in the surrounding villages. The land on which the husayniyyas are constructed is acquired for huge sums of money, as an inducement to the owners. Such transactions take place even in towns where there are no converts to Shiism, in order to gain a foothold in the area. Occasionally land is bought for a million Syrian pounds per dunam, although its market price is no more than fifty-thousand. Increasing numbers of large and ornate husayniyyas are currently under planning and construction.

Muhammad al-Shamri reports that young converts to Shiism argue against the Sunni faith in front of their friends and colleagues while offering them monetary and material inducements. Marriages to willing Shiite women are quickly arranged for those whom they manage to win over; the brides are often Iranian. Shia converts also invite the villagers and tribe members to feasts and provide them with supplies such as rice, flour, sugar and the like. At first they do not call on their guests to convert, but merely attempt to win their hearts. Later, at a second or third feast, they will try to convince them to adopt the Shiite faith.[51] Furthermore, it is reported that the aforementioned Yasin al-Mayuf and Husayn al-Raja brought bags of money from Damascus to Deir al-Zor during the Lebanon war in the summer of 2006, which was distributed among non-Shiite Lebanese refugees who came to the area, perhaps for purposes of conversion.

Money for conversions continues to arrive in the province, although sources differ about the precise origin. A man from the Persian Gulf area is said to arrive at Deir al-Zor once a month. According to some reports he, and not the Iranian Cultural Chancellery in Damascus, brings the money, although according to other reports the man and the Chancellery work in cooperation with each other. This man gives the money to Mayuf and Raja and tells them how much to distribute to each convert. The usual sum is five-thousand Syrian pounds per month.

Not all attempts to expand Shiite practice in the province have succeeded. For example, in 1996 Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir[52] made a journey through the provinces of Syria and visited centers of conversion, including the Ammar b. Yasir[53] mosque. The Syrian authorities ordered the preachers in the mosques and students to attend a sermon given by Muhajir, but its content aroused the anger of a number of Sunni clerics, who succeeded, with the help of some tribal leaders close to the regime, to put a stop to his travels throughout the country.

In 1998 a group of Shiite clerics visited the mufti of Deir al-Zor during the holiday

of Id al-Fitr. They attacked the Sunni creed, whereupon the mufti said to them: "I was with President Hafiz al-Asad just two days ago, and he told me that he did not want any sectarian strife here." With these words he foiled their plan to curse the Prophet's Companions.[54]

Similarly, in 2003 a delegation of Shiite clerics from Damascus visited the Khalid b. al-Walid Mosque at the outskirts of Deir al-Zor. They informed the mosque's preacher that they had an official permit to search for tombs of members of the Prophet's family and to maintain them properly. They asked that he cooperate with them and that he let them supervise the mosque. When he refused, they attempted to harass him and to acquire the land around the mosque, where they intended to construct a large husayniyya. Their attempts did not succeed.

In 2006 some wealthy Shiite converts wanted to construct a *husayniyya* in the village of Ayn Ali. But a day after the foundations were laid, the villagers took them apart and removed them. At the moment of writing the attempt to construct the husayniyya has not been renewed.

Shiism in the Province of Dar'a[55]

Some towns in Dara, such as Busra al-Sham, have had an indigenous Shiite population for a century, but their Shiites have professed to be Sunnis. This was the case until 1997 the arrival of Zaydan al-Ghazali, both the son-in-law of Rustum Ghazala, the former head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon, and the cousin of Brig. Gen. Rustum al-Ghazali, head of Syrian Intelligence in Lebanon. A college graduate who joined the Muslim Brotherhood and later the al-Murtada movement, Ghazali embraced Shiism publicly and began to proselytize. He received financial support from Iran and gave inducements to young people, especially cash, furniture, books and clothing. He also promoted temporary marriages with young girls in order to satisfy men's sexual needs without committing them to permanent marriage. Anyone who opposed him found himself in prison or was threatened by the Syrian security forces, to which Ghazali was very close through his family connections.

Currently Ghazali holds the position of preacher at the Ali b. Abi Talib Mosque in the al-Zahira neighborhood of the city of Dara, a Sunni mosque that Ghazali took over by force.

The population of the province of Dara also contains a large Iraqi Shiite population that pre-existed the fall of Baghdad in 2003 and has continued to grow. In the city of Dara one entire street is occupied only by Iraqi Shiite merchants. They have built a husayniyya, where all who convert to Shiism can make use of such facilities as a kindergarten, a computer room and a library for children.[56]

Abu Jafar al-Iraqi has had a profound influence on conversions to Shiism in this region. Iraqi engaged in missionary work among the wealthy, as well as among physicians, to whom he offered free trips to Iran; he also gave gifts and cash to the poor and to students. He attended meetings at which he cursed the Prophet's Companions and accuse Aisha of adultery. He disseminated hundreds of Shiite missionary books throughout the province and was the preacher at the recently constructed Great Messenger Mosque in Dara.

Iraqi left Syria for Iraq after the fall of Baghdad; his place was taken by Kazim al-Tamimi, a Shiite missionary, too, but with less of a presence than the former. For that reason Iraqi was called back, but for reasons unknown he left again two months after his return.

The building of husayniyyas has been an indicator of the increasing prominence of Shiism in the province of Dara, as well as a tool in the attempt to convert more Syrians. The first husayniyya in the city of Dara was built in 1976 near the airport, next to two Sunni mosques. Shiite clerics from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria are constantly invited to visit, in particular Abdallah Nizam, head of the Muhsiniyya School in Damascus, a powerful Shiite cleric and leader who takes part in every convocation of Shiite clerics in Syria. Other towns, ranging in population from 33,000 inhabitants to 5,000 inhabitants, also boast husayniyyas.[57] In some cases, such as in the town of al-Maliha al-Gharbiyya, the building of the husayniyya has led to a voluntary segregation of Shiites from Sunnis, and the Shiites have even given their stores and workshops new and typically Shiite names.

Conversion to Shiism has also taken place in many towns and villages where there are no husayniyyas. In the town of al-Sura, for example, a particular Shiite family is actively engaged in missionary work, providing inducements to young people to convert. It is reported that the father even offers his daughter in temporary marriage in order to attract young men. A third-year student at the Sayyida Zaynab Hawza, this young woman has supposedly entered into more than fifty temporary marriages within a span of a few months.[58]

Conversion to Shiism in the Province of al-Hasaka[59]

A number of sources[60] point out that Shiite missionaries in the province of al-Hasaka (whose population is mostly Kurdish) have recently begun to be very active. Flyers calling on people to convert, targeting mainly young people and the unemployed, have been distributed in shops in the city of al-Hasaka; these brochures

promise a monthly stipend of between 5000 and 10,000 Syrian pounds (about $200) to converts. Shiite missionaries exploit the region's poverty, with the full knowledge of the local authorities. According to some sources this activity is sponsored by the Iranians, through their cultural attaché in Aleppo, with the cooperation of the Syrian intelligence services. The attaché is a cleric by the name of Ayatollah Abd al-Sahib al-Musawi, a sophisticated Iranian Arab, who speaks fluent Arabic.

The leaders of the missionary movement in the province have allegedly trained a great number of people, either by sending them to Iran on full scholarships, for the purpose of studying the Shiite creed, or by financing trips to visit family members in southern Lebanon. The missionaries enjoy the protection of the Syrian authorities, who allow them full use of the province's mosques and grant them complete freedom of movement.[61]

The leaders of the conversion movement also buy land for the construction of husayniyyas. The latest such acquisition was in the Kurdish city of Qamishli. Recently, too, a husayniyya dedicated to the Prophet's family was constructed in al-Nashwa, financed by a Shiite businessman from Kuwait.

The Shiites in the al-Hasaka Religious College instituted the recital of prayers for the birth of a Shiite saint; some of the college's teachers also teach that temporary marriages are sanctioned by Muslim law.[62]

The leading Shiite missionaries in the province are Mahmud Nawaf al-Khalif, Dr. Hasan al-Ahmad al-Mashhadani and, perhaps the most prominent, the black-turbaned Abu Firas al-Jabburi (Mustafa Khamis), in addition to Abd al-Muhsin Abdallah al-Sarawi, author of a number of books,[63] among them *Eight Issues Easily Understood*. At least one of the province's missionaries owns a large bookstore, where weekly meetings are held and people are enticed to adopt Shiism.[64]

Conversion to Shiism in Latakia

Conversions to Shiism in the city of Latakia[65] began in the 1980s, at the instigation of the al-Murtada movement. This movement constructed some seventy-six husayniyyas in the Latakia region, the largest of which, in the Damsarkhu neighborhood, has an area of 6000 m^2, and the smallest, in the village of Ayn al-Tina, has just 40 m^2. In the past these husayniyyas were not used for missionary activity at all; rather, they served as meeting places for people opposed to the government. However, after the death of President Hafiz al-Asad, when his son Bashar enabled Teheran to gain increasing influence—especially after the fall of Baghdad—the Iranians began to manage the affairs of the Shiites in Latakia. This new phase was inaugurated by the construction of a hawza (The Great Messenger Hawza) in the

al-Azhari neighborhood of Latakia, on a tract of land belonging to a Sunni endowment. The hawza's manager is an Iraqi citizen, a representative of Khamenei, by the name of Ayman Zaytun.

In the al-Ziraa neighborhood a cultural center has been constructed that employs over three-hundred Iraqis and Lebanese whose job it is to approach people and offer them inducements to convert. Iranian officials visit the province regularly. While visiting the area, the Iranian Minister of Housing gave away three hundred newly built apartments to new converts to Shiism in Latakia. Even the head of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council, Rafsanjani, visited the region and called on the inhabitants to visit Iran.

Neither the province governor nor the provincial party secretary, the two highest officials in the region, go anywhere without Ayman Zaytun, whose picture often appears in the daily newspapers. Zaytun has a say in all administrative appointments in the city, and quite openly promises jobs to converts to Shiism. At a closed meeting he went so far as to boast that "the West thinks we shall attack it from Sidon and Tyre, but we shall surprise them from Latakia and Tartus." Shiite leaders in Latakia promise young people jobs, acceptance to university, and even wives. Those who want to participate in a holy war are sent to southern Lebanon.

Syrian universities and colleges also display the effects of Iranian influence. For example, the president of Tishrin University in Latakia provided two buildings on the campus to the Iranian ambassador in March 2007 for the purpose of establishing an Islamic college within the university.

Conversion to Shiism in Aleppo

Aleppo, too, has been experiencing the phenomenon of conversions to Shiism, with several prominent residents serving as missionaries.[66] The main Shiite center in Aleppo is the al-Nuqta Mosque near Jabal al-Hawshan. Near the city there are two Shiite villages, Nubbal and al-Zahra, whose inhabitants are very active in Shiite affairs.

Shiites control the Aleppo Red Crescent, the Red Crescent Hospital in the city is Iranian. The Iranian Consulate in Aleppo, headed by Abd al-Sahib al-Wahid al-Musawi, is very actively engaged in missionary work among university students. The consulate is quite close to the campus and provides meals to students in the hope of inducing them to convert.[67] Shiites in Aleppo typically hold large celebrations on the Prophet's birthday, the birthday of the sixth Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, and during Islamic Unity Week.

An example of the latter was the celebration on May 30, 2002, which took place

at the al-Nuqta ("The Drop") shrine; the celebration was attended by some five thousand Shiite men and women, mostly from the villages of Nubbal and al-Zahra, as well as some Sunnis. The festivities were very carefully prepared by the Iranian consul in Aleppo, including a large screen for those who were not close enough to see the notables, along with loudspeakers and projectors. The walls were covered with large signs on which traditions about the Prophet were inscribed. The celebration opened with the recitation of a few Quranic verses.

Hezbollah figured prominently there. Hasan Nasrallah's picture was placed next to those of Khomeini and Ali Khamenei. The organization was represented by Nasrallah's deputy, Shaykh Naim Qasim, who spoke about Hezbollah's achievements in southern Lebanon in terms of their propaganda value to the Shiites. He was followed by a Shiite poet, Abd al-Karim Taqi, who recited a poem about conversion to Shiism. At the end of the celebration the Iranian cultural attaché al-Musawi spoke, and mentioned a number of books that might prove useful for promoting people's faith, such as *Nahj al-balagha* and *al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya*. But perhaps the most significant event at the celebration was a mass marriage ceremony, in which sixty couples were wedded at the Iranian embassy's expense (as proclaimed by the announcer at the event). Musawi also announced that each of the grooms would receive a gift from the Iranian embassy and Khamenei's office.[68]

Conversion to Shiism in Idlib

Similar activities promoting conversion have taken place in the province of Idlib.

Towards the end of 2006 a religious Shiite college opened in the province. Its curriculum is Iranian and the school offers numerous inducements to potential converts. Shiite missionaries are very active in the province. Some of them hand out monetary inducements, such as a sum of 2500 Syrian pounds, to whomever names his son Hasan or Husayn.[69]

One of the most prominent centers of Shiite activity in the province is Zarzur, a village near the Turkish border. The first conversions to Shiism in the village occurred in 1945, performed by Muhammad Naji al-Ghafri, himself a convert to Shiism. His missionary activities were supported by the Iranian embassy in Damascus, which maintained regular contact with him and financed the construction of a husayniyya.

Today a fourth of the village's inhabitants are Shiites. Whole clans have converted, including the Tarmash, the al-Manjad, and the Asayyad. By now Shiism has also spread into some neighboring villages, although in smaller numbers.[70]

Conversion to Shiism in Hims and the Coast

In Hims there is a large concentration of Shiites in the al-Bayyada neighborhood, one of whose streets is named Iran Street. There is also a large Shiite mosque there. The village of al-Hamidiyya, not far from Hims, is Shiite as well.

Iranian and Iraqi Shiites are active along the Syrian coast. Jamil al-Asad controlled the Syrian ports and the areas nearby with the support and encouragement of his brother Hafiz al-Asad. He also did missionary work in these areas to convert Alawites to Shiism. One of their great successes has been that the head of the Tartus religious endowments (*awqaf*), Dr. Muhammad al-Sayyid, has publicly advocated the Shiite creed, as stated on the front page of *al-Minbar*, a journal devoted to converts to Shiism.[71]

Looking Ahead

Today Shiites constitute somewhat more than one percent of the eighteen million people presently living in Syria. Many circumstances at present—geographic, political, historic, and financial, but perhaps not overwhelmingly religious or doctrinal—are conspiring to cause an increase in conversions to the Shiite creed. The percentage of Shiites in the year 1953 was not more than 0.4% of all the Syrian population.

The increasing number of conversions is, first, the consequence of geography and history. Shiites in Syria today possess a considerable number of institutions and shrines, the most important of which are the tomb of Sayyida Zaynab, the shrine of Sukayna daughter of Husayn, and the "Mosque of the Drop" in Aleppo. All these sites are visited by numerous Shiite pilgrims from the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Iran. Iraqi Shiite immigrants as well as Iranian pilgrims who come to visit Shiite shrines in Syria constitute a considerable human army imbued with the Shiite creed, and help disseminate its ideas and doctrines.

Other features of Shiism have made the creed attractive to potential converts. Shiites build houses of study next to their shrines and establish religious authorities there, which has given them a certain independence with respect to religious rulings and the leadership of the community. Shiites, moreover, celebrate many holidays, including Ashura, al-Ghadir, the birth and death dates of the Twelver Shiite imams, and others. Sunnis are invited to these celebrations and are thus exposed to Shiite ideas.

Politics has also played an important role in fostering Shiite conversions. After Bashar al-Asad came to power in 2000, Iranian influence in Syria grew considerably, supported

and encouraged by the Syrian regime. As a result numerous Iranians and Iraqis became naturalized Syrian citizens, and the pace of conversion to Shiism grew, especially among Alawites, who had a desire to belong to a larger and more broadly-based community.

The Iranian embassy and its cultural attaché in Damascus have been active in the dissemination of the Shiite creed in Syria and are active in missionary work in every province of the country, which they support by way of financial inducements, scholarships to Iranian universities, free medical care, monthly stipends, and more. In addition, the Lebanon war of 2006 fanned anti-Western sentiment by the Syrian media, who oppose the existence of Israel and support the resistance movements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and in Lebanon. This aroused a wave of admiration for Hasan Nasrallah, with the result that many Syrians converted to Shiism and Shiite activities in Syria intensified.

This kind of demonstration of pro-Shiite feeling (by showing admiration of Nasrallah) may be only momentary, as it is rooted in an emotional reaction rather than on deep-seated religious conviction.[72] However, whatever the nature of the motivation, the fact of the swing towards Shiism within Syria remains.

NOTES

1. *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*, URL: http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/.
2. Sa'ad al-Din Ibrahim (ed.), *Religious Communities, Creeds and Ethnic Groups, Eighth Annual Report 2005*, Cairo: Ibn KhaldÙn Center for Developmental Studies141, URL: http://www.eicds.org/arabic/publicationsAR/reports/2005-min-AR.doc.
3. See, for example, the following URL: www.arabic.cnn.com/2007/middle_east/4/2/shiite~/syria/index.htm1.
4. Official statistics put the number of Iraqi refugees in Syria (of every ethnic group) at 1.2 million, while the UN Commissioner for Refugees estimates the number of Iraqi refugees at 800,000.
5. The term "source of emulation" in Shiite usage refers to senior clerics who have the right to render independent judicial judgments. This class of religious scholars among Twelver Shiites came into being in the nineteenth century CE in Iran. The idea of a class of such "sources of emulation" has developed in Shiite sources despite the fact that it has no roots in early Shiite thought. For more details see: Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiism* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp 140-146, 248-278; Ahmad Kazemi.Moussavi, "The establishment of the Position of Marja'iyyat al-Taqlid in the Twelver Shi'ite Community." *Iranian Studies* (1985); L. Clarke, "The Shi'i Construction of Taqlid," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12:1 (2001), pp 40-64.
6. Although the Alawites, known also as Nusayris, are a sect that grew out of Shiism, they differ in fundamental ways from Twelver Shiites.
7. The Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad and the Lebanese Shiite leader Musa al-Sadr were close personal friends. In September 1973 the latter published a legal ruling (*fatwa*) that recognized the Alawites

living in Lebanon as Shiites. The purpose of the ruling was to promote relations with Syria. That country did indeed express its great satisfaction with the ruling. For more details on this issue see: Ahmad Khalidi and Husayn J. Agha, *Suriyya wa-Iran Tunafisu wa-Tu'awinu* (*Syria and Iran: Competition and Cooperation*), trans. 'Adnan Hasan (Beirut: Dar al-Kunuz al-Adabiyya, 1997), pp 12-13.

8. See www.ikhwan.net/wiki/index.php1.
9. www.arabic.cnn.com/2007/middle_east/4/2/shiite.syria/index.htm1.
10. The 32-page study is entitled "The Shiitization Process in Syria 1985-2006: A Socio-Statistic Paper, a 1985-2006," Damascus, November 2006, prepared under the Auspice of UMIS, The National Council for Truth, Justice & Reconciliation in Syria. It was carried out clandestinely, and the names of the researchers do not appear in the publication (they are kept on a separate document by the financing institution in Belgium), for fear they would face persecution for receiving funds from abroad. The study contains an Introduction by Nizar Nayyuf, an economist and political scientist who specializes in the comparative socio-economics of the dictatorships in the Mediterranean region.
11. Hamida Hamid, "A Study on Conversion to Shiism in Syria," *Elaph*, Jan. 7, 2007.
12. The great majority of conversions among Ismailis are of a purely ceremonial nature, such as separating men and women at prayers, in contrast to the usual "nearly mixed" prayers in that sect.
13. See p.9.
14. Hamida Hamid, "A Study on Conversion to Shiism in Syria," *Elaph*, Jan. 7, 2007.
15. The greatest concentration of Shiites in Damascus is to be found in the neighborhood of Hayy al-Amin, where the Imam Ali b. Abi Talib Mosque, the al-Zahra Mosque, and the venerable Muhsiniyya School are located.
16. She is called "the Great" to distinguish her from other women with the same name. For more details on her see: Hasan al-Safar, "al-Mar'a al-'Azima: Qira'a fi Hayat al-Sayyida Zaynab bint 'Ali 'Alayhima al-salam" (*The Great Woman: Readings in the Biography of Sayyida Zaynab Daughter of 'Ali, May Both Rest in Peace*), (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-sayyida Zaynab al-khayriyya, 1993), pp 280-284; Faraj al-'Imran, "Wafat Zaynab al-Kubra" (*The Death of Zaynab the Great*), (Kuwait: Maktabat al-alfayn, 1986), p 65; Muhammad Hasanayn al-Sabiqi, "Marqad al-'Aqila Zaynab" (*The Resting-Place of Zaynab the Wife*), (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-a'lami, 1979),p 109.
17. The tomb is located in the southern part of al-Ghuta, the oasis south of Damascus. Today the village, located about seven kilometers from Damascus, is known as *qabr al-sitt* ("the Lady's Tomb"). The tomb itself is on the west side of the village. For details see: www.imamreza.net/arb/imamreza.php?id=1925.
18. Abd al-Safir al-Husayn, *Tahdhir al-Barriyya min Nashat al-Shi'a fi Suriyya* (*A Warning to the Land about Shiite Activities in Syria*), (Cairo: Dar al-Muhaddithina, 2007), p 22. The shrine itself consists of a mausoleum with a golden dome, two imposing minarets, and adorned porticos. Its total area is about 15 square meters and has a capacity of 5000 people.
19. Muhammad al-Hasnawi, "Iranian Influence in Syria," October 13, 2005, URL: www.arraee.com.
20. For details about it see: www.malkiya.net/vb/showthread.php?t=5085.
21. For more details see: A. Arazi, "Sukayna bint al-Husayn," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (1960), Vol. IV, 802a-803b.
22. For more details see: www.imamreza.net/arb/imamreza.php?id=2305; Kawthar Fu'ad Sadiq, "al-Shahida al-Sayyida Ruqayya bint al-Imam al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, al-Khamis min Safar Dhikra Rahiliha" ("The Martyr the Sayyida Ruqayya, Daughter of the Imam Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib; the Anniversary of Her Death is on the Fifth Day of the Month of Safar"), *al-Naba'*, issue for the feast of *'Ashura'* 1428 AH, URL: www.annabaa.org/ashara/. The wall no longer exists today, but in earlier

times a cemetery was established outside the wall, opposite this gate. It is one of the city's largest and best-known cemeteries; today the city's expansion has brought it nearly into the center.

23. Bashir, *Report on Conversion to Shiism in Syria* (File on the Conversion Movement in Darayya), URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh020.htm.
24. See: www.shababek.de.
25. An Alawite convert to Shiism, Ghayth 'Ammur, heads the conversion efforts in the city of Baniyas now, after Jamil al-Asad's death. Before being converted by Jamil al-Asad he was not a religious person, and owned a video store. Ghayth is a member of the Syrian National Party.
26. See: www.syriahr.com.
27. He also accused the Prophet's Companions of not taking the post of caliph away from 'Uthman and giving it to 'Ali, and also of giving the post to Abu Bakr. Furthermore, he attacked Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf and Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah for removing 'Ali from the post of caliph. In addition, he claimed that the Prophet's family was infallible, and that its least member was greater than the greatest Companion. For more on the Mufti's speech see: Munir Ghadaban, "Oh Learned Clerics of Syria, Is It Not Time to Take a Man's Stand in the Face of the Mufti?," URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh004.htm. See also: Yusuf al-Husayni, "Shiite Activity in Syria's Towns and Villages," URL: www.ahlalhdeeth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=113193.
28. See the following website: www.stdp.org/8-11-altayr-alsori.htm.
29. See: "Religious Leaders Reject the Dissemination of Iranian Shiism in Syria," URL: www.aljaml.com/node/9168.
30. "Clerics Deny That Iran Disseminates Shiism in Syria," *al-'Arabiyya*, November 19, 2007, URL: www.aljaml.com/node/9168.
31. "Conversion to Shiism in Syria: Various Bodies Try to Disseminate Shiism among the Kurds in Syria," URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh019.htm.
32. Muhammad al-Hasnawi.,"al-Nufuz al-Irani fi Suriyya"(The influence of Iran on Syria) www.odabasham.net/show.php?sid+4997.
33. Riyad Alam al-Din;"Istratigiyyat Iran linashr al-tashau' fi Suriyya"(The Iranian strategy to spread Shi'ism in Syria) Al-Watan al-Arabi Newspaper Vol. 1532, June 6, 2006.
34. Ahmad al-Ayyubi, "The Iranian Incursion into Syria under the Auspices of the Asads," Nov. 19, 2007, URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh005.htm.
35. Ibrahim Omar; "al-tamaddud al-shi'I fi al-'alam al-Islami wafi al-Sham al-Mubarak" (The spread of Shiism in the Islamic world and in blessed Syria).
36. Abd al-Safir al-Husayn, "Tahdhir al-Barriyya min Nashat al-Shi'a fi Suriyya" (*A Warning to the Land about Shiite Activities in Syria*), (Cairo: Dar al-Muhaddithina, 2007). Al Husayn Abd al-Sattar, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
37. The Hawza is an institution of Shiite religious learning in which the curriculum is based on the principle of independent judgment (*ijtihad*). Although the full term for the institution is *al-hawza al-ilmiyya*, it is commonly denoted by the word *hawza* alone, devoid of attributes. Most *hawza*s are located next to the tombs of Imams or other great clerics. The reason for this lies in the fact that Shiite pilgrims give endowments to these shrines and the funds thus made available benefit all the adjoining institutions. This provides the hawza with a means of support, enables pilgrims to seek the advice of the students and teachers there, and frees the latter to pursue religious learning. For more detail see my article: Khalid Sindawi, (2007). "Modern Shi'ite Religious *Hawza* Instruction and Its Role in Shaping Shi'ite Identity" (The H*awza*s of al-Najaf and Qumm As a Case Study), Middle Eastern Studies, 43(6), p 831-856.
38. Muhammad al-Hasnawi, "Iranian Influence in Syria," October 13 2005, URL: www.arraee.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=6680.

39. See: www.albainah.net/index.aspx?function=Item&id=13332&lang.
40. Allen Nickmeyer, "A Wave of Conversion from Sunnism to Shiism in Syria, Due to Admiration for Nasrallah," November 19, 2007, URL: www.m-alhuda.com/showthread.php?t=665. See also Ahmad al-Ayyubi, "Iran Penetrates the Arab World: Facts and Figures, Dimensions and Indications," November 19, 2007, URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh012.htm.
41. "Clerics Deny That Iran Disseminates Shiism in Syria," *al-'Arabiyya*, November 19, 2007, URL: www.aljaml.com/node/9168.
42. See, for example, what the Syrian expert on minorities Nabil Fayyad says in the article mentioned in the note above.
43. Salman b. Fahd b. Abdallah al-Awda is a propagandist for the Saudi Salafi movement and author of a number of books on Islamic jurisprudence. Today he manages the well-known Islamist website *al-Islam al-yawm* ("Islam Today"), on which he also disseminates his own lessons and lectures, which are also available on audio cassettes. For more details on him see: www.radio.islamtoday.net/trjmah.cfm?st=1.
44. "Conversion to Shiism in Syria: Various Bodies Try to Disseminate Shiism among the Kurds in Syria," URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh019.htm.
45. Hayyan Nayyuf,"Shi'at Suriyya Yaruddun 'Ala Ittihamatihim Bi' al-tabshir' Bayna al-Sunna wal-'Alawiyyin" (Syrian Shiites react to their accusers for missionary activities among Sunnis and Alawites), www.alarabiya.net/article/2006/11/0628855.html.
46. Ubayy Hasan, "On Conversion to Sunnism and Shiism in Syria: An Answer to the Wahhabis and Those Who Imitate Their Ways," URL: www.aljaml.com/node/11387.
47. Al-Husayn, *Tahdhir al-Bariyya min Nashat al-Shi'a fi Suriyya (A Warning to the People about Shiite Activities in Syria*), (Cairo:Dar al-Muhaddithin, 2007), p 71; Yet another well-known convert to Shiism in the Deir al-Zor region is Ibrahim Abu Gharghura, from the village of al-Abd. He became extremely wealthy and now owns a great deal of real estate, including a large villa in the Tudmur project near Damascus. He married off his daughter to an Iranian, and his sons married Iranian women.
48. *Ibid*.
49. Among the most prominent converts to Shiism in Hatla are the following: Husayn Raja, Yasin al-Mayuf, Musa al-Mulla Abd, Ali al-Jasim, Hasan al-Habali, Khadr al-Jasim, Muhammad al-Jasim, Abu Ali Khalaf al-Hadir, Mahmud al-Said, Isa al-Hilal, and Umar al-Ali b. Hammadi, the first Shiite convert in Hatla. For more details see: Abu Yusuf al-Husayni, "Shiite Activity in Syria's Towns and Villages," URL: www.ahlalhdeeth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=113193.
50. *Ibid*. The first of these husayniyyas, in Hatla, was built by Muhammad Hasan al-Balat. Another was built by Amin al-Raja with funds from Abd al-Muhsin al-Hairi, and a third, called "the Imam al-Hasan husayniyya," was built by Diya Habash. Yet another husayniyy*a* was built by Yasin al-Mayuf and a fifth, called "The Great Messenger husayniyya," was built by Husayn al-Raja. A sixth husayniyya, named after the Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, was built by Ibrahim Musa Mulla.
51. Muhamad Salih al-Shimri, "Shahid 'Ayan: al-tashayu' fi Dir al-Zur Imtidad Farisi walaysa Madhhabiyan" (Eyewitness: Conversion to Shiism in Dir al-Zur is Persian expansionism and not doctrinal), www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh017.htm.
52. Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir (b. 1950) is a Shiite cleric and a well-known preacher, born in Iraq. He went to high school in Karbala. In 1963 he joined the hawza there and pursued both secular and religious studies at the same time. He went through all the stages of hawza education and went on to teach Islam at schools for Quran recital.
53. Ammar bin Yasir (567-657 CE) was a Companion of the Prophet who emigrated to al-Madina with

him and fought at the battles of Badr, Uhud, al-Khandaq and Bayat al-Radwan. The Prophet called him "The good benefactor." Umar appointed him governor of Kufa for a time. He was present at the battles of the camel and Siffin with Ali b. Abi Talib. He did at the battle of Siffin at the age of ninety-three.

54. Muhamad Salih al-Shimri, "Shahid 'Ayan: al-tashayu' fi Dir al-Zur Imtidad Farisi walaysa Madhhabiyan" (Eyewitness: Conversion to Shiism in Dir al-Zur is Persian expansionism and not doctrinal),http://www.ikhwansyria.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=887&Itemid=29
55. Dara is a city and province to the south of Damascus. The city, with a population of 117,000 is located about one-hundred km from the Jordanian border. Among the province's major towns are Nawa (pop. 80,000), Tafas (pop. 31,000), Ankhal (pop. 30,000), Jasim (pop. 29,000), Dail (pop. 38,000), Busra al-Sham (pop. 33,000), al-Sanamayn (pop. 2,400) and others.
56. Ahmad al-Ayyubi, "Iran Penetrates the Arab World: Facts and Figures, Dimensions and Indications," November 19, 2007, URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh012.htm
57. There is also a husayniyya in Busra al-Sham, a town of 33,000 people. It is less active than the one in Dara, to which it is subordinate. Still, it engages in missionary work, especially during the first ten days of the month of Muharram.

    In al-Shaykh Miskin, a town with some 20,000 inhabitants, a husayniyya similarly active and energetic as the one in Dar'a has been built. It is run by an Iraqi, Abu Muntazar. Only Shiites were permitted to take part in its construction. It, too, has facilities for children, like the husayniyya in Dar'a.

    In the town of al-Qarfa a husayniyya called "Muslim Unity" has been built by Iran. Its construction was supervised by its current preacher, Zaydan al-Ghazali, who enriched the poor in order to draw them to him. He openly receives financial backing from Iran, and equally openly visits educated people and notables and calls on them to convert to Shiism. To these people he also offers money, whereas to the poor he offers temporary marriages.

    In Tafas, a town with 31,000 inhabitants, the Shiites began making preparations for constructing a husayniyya. Currently, however, the local Shiites meet in a large house, which they consider their husayniyya for the moment. It was given to them by a certain Muhammad al-Hijazi, a man close to the Iranian ambassador to Syria and a representative of Khamene'i, whom he has visited on a number of occasions.
58. See "Shiism in Dara," URL: www.d-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=34097; Bilal Muwaffaq, "Conversion to Shiism Becomes Prevalent in Five Counties in the Province of Dar'a," November 19, 2007, URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh001.htm.
59. Al-Hasaka is a city in north-eastern Syria on the Khabur and al-Jaghjagh rivers, with a population of 1,100,000. It is the main city of the province by the same name, at a distance of 600 km from Damascus, 494 km from Aleppo and 179 km from Deir al-Zor. The province's main cities are al-Hasaka, al-Qamishli, al-Malikiyya, Ras al-Ayn, Ayn Diwar, Ramilan al-Amaliyya, al-Qahtaniyya, Amuda, al-Darbasiyya and Tall Nimr.
60. Ibrahim Darwish, "On Proselytizing for the Shiite Cause in al-Hasaka: How Cheap Religion Is to These People!!", February 18, 2007, URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh014.htm.
61. "Various Bodies Try to Disseminate Shiism among the Kurds in Syria," April 20, 2007, URL: www.syriakurds.com/2007/sheasy/sh019.htm.
62. Al-Husayni, *A Warning to the Land about Shiite Activities in Syria*, p 73.
63. Abu Yusuf al-Husayni, "Shiite Activity in Syria's Towns and Villages;" see also: Al-Husayni, *op. cit.*, p 73-74.
64. *Ibid.*, p 73.

65. Latakia is Syria's main harbor and the capital of the province of the same name, on the Mediterranean coast. The city has some 650,000 inhabitants belonging to numerous Muslim and Christian denominations and many different ethnic groups (Turkmen, Armenians, Kurds and more). Among these the Armenians have preserved their original language and culture more than most.
66. Among the most important missionaries in the area are Dr. Mahmud Akkam, a professor at the Schools of Law and Education of Aleppo University and a preacher at the al-Tawhid Mosque, one of the city's largest and most popular Sunni mosques; Ahmad Hassun, Syria's Chief Mufti; and Muhammad Adib Rahhal, a convert to Shiism.
67. Abu Yusuf al-Husayni, "Shiite Activity in Syria's Towns and Villages;" see also: Al-Husayni, *A Warning to the Land about Shiite Activities in Syria*, p 52.
68. Al-Husayni, *op. cit*., pp 53-55.
69. Al-Husayni, *op. cit*.
70. "Shiite Expansion in Syria—Conversion to Shiism in Zarzur," URL: www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=189953. The neighboring villages include 'Amud, Khariba, al-Malnad, al-Janudiyya and al-Dariyya.
71. Al-Husayni, *A Warning to the Land about Shiite Activities in Syria*,p 69.
72. "Shiism in Syria: Religious Rights Preserved in an Oppressed Society," URL: www.arabic.cnn.com/2007/middle_east/4/2/shiite.syria/index.html.

Jordan's Encounter with Shiism

By Khalid Sindawi

THE SECURITY SERVICES OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN have in recent years become actively engaged in monitoring the activities of Shiites who are residing within their country—including Iraqi refugees, but especially what appears to be a growing number of new converts to Shiism. The security services have carried out raids, arrests and interrogations targeting some Shiite populations, and they are keeping a close eye on political and religious developments within Shiism both within Jordan and beyond. This has naturally caused Shiite refugees and converts in Jordan to be ever on their guard, and they have frequently turned to the traditional practice of *taqiyya*, or dissimulation, according to which Shiites are permitted to hide their true beliefs in case of danger. Needless to say, this tactic has made the task of the Jordanian security services more difficult.

An obvious question comes to mind: Why have the Jordanian security services given this matter of Shiism and of conversion to Shiism so much attention? There are in fact a number of reasons.

First, although conversion to Shiism is not a widespread phenomenon in Jordan today, the fact that it is occurring worries Jordanian authorities, since the country is overwhelmingly Sunni and has historically been untouched by sectarian strife. The Jordanian security services fear that conversion to Shiism will grow dramatically and beyond their control, and that this might expose Jordan to the ethnic and sectarian conflicts that have been on the rise in recent times in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Jordan's rulers seek to avoid such conflicts at any cost, having witnessed the unrest in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other Muslim-majority countries.

Second, Jordan's ruler's worries about Shiism are a function of their deep concerns about the growing influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Middle East. They worry not simply about Iran's growing religious influence but Iran's potential political influence over Shiites and new converts. One area of particular concern for the Jordanians is Hezbollah's growing profile, including the ties it has formed with Hamas and the support it gets from the Muslim Brotherhood. Some worry that, because of Iran's influence over this Hezbollah-Brotherhood alliance, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood may not be inclined to stem any future wave of conversion to Shiism among its own numerous Jordanian and Palestinian members, should this begin to occur. Not all agree with this view, however. One member of the Jordanian parliament, Muhammad Aqel, who belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood, believes that the alliance will not bring widespread conversion. He claims that conversion to Shiism is much more likely to occur among youths whose religious beliefs are based on emotion and who have not received a proper Sunni religious education (i.e., not Muslim Brotherhood members).

Be this as it may, the Jordanian security services are keenly aware of the potential military and political deterioration in the Middle East. Currently, the region's politics is increasingly divided between two camps. One is led by Iran and includes Syria and various Islamic movements such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad; the other, which might be called the "Arab moderate camp," consists of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The relationships between these two camps are fraught with tension and could deteriorate suddenly and with little warning. Unrest could easily encompass broad sections of the Arab public everywhere, leading to immense internal challenges for Arab regimes.

Many Arab rulers see themselves in an ideological competition with the Iranian-led camp. The behavior of Hezbollah and the carefully crafted speeches of its secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, as well as the purposely aggressive stance taken by the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad against Israel and America, is clearly meant for the ears of Arab and Islamic public opinion. These leaders' antagonistic posturing may well arouse popular support for the Iranian and Shiite camp and push many young people into the arms of the Iranians, particularly if the military and political situation in the region worsens.

At the same time, Arab leaders in the moderate camp face a difficult situation because of their position on the Arab-Israeli conflict and their relations with America. Popular anger in the Arab world is rising for several reasons. These include America's ongoing support for Israel; the collapse of the peace process and the lack of any sign that Israel is making an effort to restart it; the poor results of the second Arab initiative in the Security Council; and the Palestinians' inability to resolve their internal differences. Popular feelings of discontent and anger do not stop with Israel

and the United States, but are also directed at moderate Arab allies. Arab leaders have warned the U.S. administration that if the Palestinian problem is ignored, America's friends in the region will face difficulty and spreading radicalism. In their view, if a confrontation transpires, the Iranian axis will most certainly exploit it for its own military and political benefit.

THE JORDANIAN SECURITY SERVICES HAVE BEGUN CONSTRUCTING A DETAILED database of Iraqi Shiites who are active in Amman in light of reliable information that some of these Shiites have extremist tendencies and are in close contact with Iran and its intelligence and military organizations. Jordanian converts to Shiism are routinely investigated and supervised to prevent them from engaging in missionary activities. Furthermore, security sources confirm that anyone proven to be engaged in Shiite missionary work is immediately deported from Jordan. Indeed, 23 Iraqis accused of "disseminating Shiism" among members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the al-Baqaa refugee camp were deported.[1] The security forces also search Shiite bookshops in Amman to ensure that they are not selling books that encourage conversion. Many such books are imported from Lebanon and Syria; others have been brought into the country by Iraqi Shiites since 1990, where they have been copied and reprinted.

Middle East analysts are not all in agreement whether conversion to Shiism poses a security and political risk to Jordan or whether there is an attendant danger of Iranian influence. For instance, the analyst Jamil al-Nimri believes that although conversion to Shiism is, at the moment, quite limited, it nonetheless represents an Iranian bridgehead that could become significant in the event of a regional confrontation between Iran and the United States. Nimri distinguishes between religious and political adoption of Shiism; he also thinks that Jordan's security could indeed be threatened if it turns out that information about the existence of Iranian cells in Jordan is true, and that these cells are activated in case of a regional crisis.

On the other hand, the political analyst and head of the Jerusalem Center for Political Studies, Urayb al-Rantawi, sees no reason for the Jordanian authorities to be worried about Iranian influence. He believes that such fears are fed by America, which wants to create what he calls "Iranophobia," in an effort to persuade people that the real danger to Arab societies is posed by Iran rather than Israel. Al-Rantawi believes that the geographical and demographic barriers between Iran and Jordan are such that Jordan is neither in danger from Shiism nor likely to fall under Iranian influence, unlike some other Arab countries which may have reason to worry. On the contrary, al-Rantawi maintains that it would be dangerous to try to create a military or political crisis with Iran and the Shiite forces in the Middle East.

Al-Rantawi also raises interesting questions: what would happen if Iran and the United States eventually made a deal with each other? In such a scenario, what would Jordan have gained by pursuing a policy that was hostile toward Iran?

In trying to keep track of conversions to Shiism, one of the difficulties faced by Jordanian security forces is the fact that the process of conversion usually proceeds in stages. The first step in the adoption of the Shiite creed is the development of sympathy towards the idea of the Shiite imamate, or the affirmation of the right of the Prophet's descendants to lead the Muslim community. This includes the belief that the Prophet's family was greatly wronged by the Prophet's Companions and later by Muslim states (especially the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates). In other words, the prospective convert accepts the Shiite claim that Ali b. Abi Talib was the legitimate successor to the Prophet and not Abu Bakr, Umar or the subsequent caliphs accepted by Sunni tradition. Furthermore, the prospective convert believes that Ali's descendants are the true leaders of the Muslim nation who have been unjustly deprived of their position and authority.

The second step in the conversion of those who have been convinced of Ali's right to rule and of the injustice done to his descendants consists of studying the Shiite creed and its religious law. A convert to Shiism is called "enlightened" (*mustabsir*), meaning someone who has seen the right way and affirms the importance of the Prophet's family, loving it with all his heart. The enlightened, who quite often immerse themselves in the study of Shiite books on faith and law, confess to having intimate spiritual links with the *hawza* of the city of Qom in Iran and with the wider community of other enlightened "perceivers" in the Arab world. CDs produced in Qom tell the stories of the "Arab enlightened." Today the Zaynab hawza in Damascus is one of the main centers of the enlightened. Here they study, tighten their links with other Shiites from the region, and obtain books written by Shiite imams and religious authorities.

Interestingly enough, the Arab enlightened, unlike actual Shiites, are not required to pay the "fifth,"[2] nor are they required to subject themselves to the rulings of any particular religious authority. This, after all, would reveal their conversion status, and would ultimately increase their vulnerability to interrogation by the authorities. Furthermore, they make frequent use of taqiyya and deny the fact of their conversion to Shiism, which helps them to avoid trouble.

Although Shiite communities have lived in the Arab world for centuries, the "Shiite question" has never existed in the Middle East as it does today. Iranian influence waned during the 1990s, when the reformists, headed by former leader Muhammad Khatami, attempted to improve relations with the neighboring Arab states and promised not

to export the revolution. However, "Khatami's perestroika" did not last long, and today the mullahs once again dictate Iran's foreign policy. Iran's nuclear program has helped it gain more influence, as the American involvement in Iraq deteriorated.

For all of these reasons and others, Jordanian officials believe that there are Shiite sleeper cells operating in their country. Broad segments of Jordanian society expressed enthusiastic support for Hezbollah during its recent war against Israel, and the Jordanian authorities are aware of the growing Iranian and Shiite influence throughout the region, by way of the Iran-Syria axis, reinforced by various Islamic movements. In the Arab world in general, Iranian influence is viewed with some alarm, as reflected in statements made by leaders of the group of moderate Arab states, whose central members (Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan) openly warn against Iranian influence and express suspicion over the political loyalty of Arab Shiites. In addition, newspaper articles in these countries regularly warn that Iranian President Ahmadinejad and his colleagues are making attempts to export Iran's Islamic Revolution once again.

Several factors have contributed to the phenomenon of conversion to Shiism in Jordan. First, broad segments of Jordanian society were impressed by Hezbollah's performance in its 2006 war with Israel. Some Jordanians who were thus impressed underwent a "political conversion" to Shiism, which was later followed by religious conversion. Most of these converts were residents of Palestinian refugee camps, mainly on the outskirts of Amman. Among the converts were also a number of Jordanians belonging to prominent families from al-Salt, al-Tufayla and al-Badiya.[3] Informed sources claim that 150 families converted in the al-Baqaa refugee camp, mostly after Hezbollah launched rocket attacks against northern Israel.[4]

According to some sources, numerous Jordanian youths went to Lebanon after the war and visited Hezbollah camps. Some of these youths converted to Shiism, and then returned to Jordan. In the opinion of observers, Hezbollah's psychological and morale achievements at the time were exploited in Jordan, where conversion had thus far been very limited; Shiism was given a push by the "divine victory" over Israel and by Nasrallah's new standing as a hero among the Arab public. This also encouraged Iraqi Shiites in Jordan to speak openly about their faith and to further the claim that Hezbollah was assisted by God in its war against Israel.

There is strong evidence that growing numbers of Jordanians traveled to Damascus and Lebanon during the 2006 war and in its aftermath, where they visited Shiite shrines. Hundreds of them returned after converting to Shiism and went on to convince their families to convert as well, using religious and historical arguments to prove that the Shiite creed is truer than Sunnism.

Another factor in these conversions is Shiite satellite channels, which have become influential in Jordan and other Arab countries, especially after the occupation of Iraq. Today there are around 20 such channels, which broadcast Shiite sermons and traditions, making a considerable impact on public opinion. The more important of these channels are al-Fayhaa,[5] al-Anwar,[6] al-Kawthar[7] and Ahlulbayt.[8] Among their best-known preachers are Muhammd al-Waili and Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir.

The Shiite station that has had perhaps the greatest influence over Arab public opinion in recent years is Hezbollah's al-Manar.[9] Many people watch the station for its news broadcasts—especially since the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel military confrontation—but the station also broadcasts Shiite religious propaganda. For instance, a Jordanian husband reported that his wife used to watch the station because she was impressed with Hezbollah, but late at night it would broadcast programs whose religious content did not accord with the Sunni view, and he consequently forbade her to watch the station.

The Internet also plays a significant role in conversions to Shiism. According to a Jordanian media expert, the proportion of Jordanians who access Shiite websites is one of the highest in the Arab world. Shiite missionary websites number in the dozens; among the most popular are al-Mustabsiruna (the enlightened) and al-Mutahawwiluna (the converted). Both of these sites post lists of the names of hundreds of Sunnis who have converted to Shiism, and also publish letters in which new converts explain how and why they took this step. Naturally, there are also Sunni websites aimed at countering Shiite claims and presenting the stories of Shiites who have converted to the Sunni creed. Among these sites are al-Bayyina and al-Rasid.[10]

Members of the Shiite community in Jordan belong to a number of different groups of varying origins. First are the Shiites whose families originally came from Southern Lebanon, especially from Bint Jbeil. More than 5,000 Shiites in Jordan have ancestors who came from southern Lebanon. They left their homes after the town of Bint Jbeil was destroyed by the French in the course of their campaign in Syria and Lebanon after World War I.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Bint Jbeil was a major commercial center, whose merchants traveled to northern Palestine, southern Syria and northern Jordan. Many also had homes in these areas. The people of Bint Jbeil rose up against the French mandate in 1920, protesting the establishment of Greater Lebanon, to which the Jabal Amel region was annexed. Following these disturbances, the French sent an expeditionary force of more than 4,000 soldiers, who attacked Jabal Amel and destroyed much of the town of Bint Jbeil.[11] Subsequently many of the city's residents fled to northern Palestine, Jordan and southern Syria, with which

they were already familiar due to their previous commercial dealings. They stayed there in the hope of returning some day to their homes. Indeed, many of them did return in the mid-1940s, after the French had been driven out of Lebanon.

The Jordanian Shiites of Lebanese origin live mainly in the province of Irbid (80 km north of the capital Amman), in the city of Ramtha. They've also settled in smaller towns such as al-Tara, Kafr Asad and Dayr Abi Said, and some live in Amman. These Shiites have integrated into their local society, and some have married into Jordanian families. They number close to 3,000 today, the most prominent being the Bayaun, Sad, Dabaja, Firdaws, Juma, al-Sharara, Harb, Barjawi and al-Bazzi families. Although these Shiites have become assimilated, some still symbolically commemorate Shiite occasions.

In the 1990s members of these families made contact with the Shiite al-Khoei Islamic Center in London, with the blessings of Prince Hasan, who encouraged dialogue between the various sects and ethnic groups. However, a proposed Shiite organization, to be named "Abu Durr al-Ghifar," was never established, since the Jordanian authorities had second thoughts and refused to support the idea.

Jordanian officials confirm the existence of Jordanian Shiite families whose members are full-fledged citizens and maintain good relations with the state. Yet, they do not deny doubting the loyalty of some Jordanian Shiites, whom they suspect of having contact with Shiite religious organizations outside the country, and even with Hezbollah. There are also those who say that in the course of the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988), the Jordanian authorities attempted to investigate their Shiite citizens' loyalty, in view of the fact that Jordan sided with Iraq. According to these accounts, Jordanian security services kept a close eye on Jordanian Shiites during and after the war. This scrutiny returned in the wake of the crushed Shiite uprising in southern Iraq in 1991, which deeply affected Jordanian Shiites. As a result, the Jordanian media considered them hostile and suspicions have lingered since.

After the fall of the Saddam Hussein in 2003, a great many Iraqis fled to Jordan, for both personal and economic reasons. Their number was estimated at more than one million, and the majority of them are Shiites. According to some sources, there are currently some 200,000 Iraqi Shiites in Jordan, belonging to two groups. One group consists of poor people who would rather move on to Syria, where the cost of living is lower and where Shiites are freer to practice their faith. This group is attached more to its religious creed than to Arab ideals. The second group consists of more affluent Iraqi Shiites who are imbued with the ideals of Arab nationalism and who likely had good relations with the Baathist Iraqi regime. Members of this group prefer to stay in Jordan, where they do not feel detached from their Arab identity. Many of them are well-educated and familiar with the various Islamic sects and the disputes among them. This group exploited the Jordanian law, recently repealed,

which gave Jordanian citizenship to anyone willing to invest at least 15 thousand dinars in the country.

The Iraqi Shiites who have become assimilated into Jordanian society have been able to exert some influence, especially since many people in Jordan do not understand Shiism well. In an interview Muhammad Abu Rumman conducted with Mahir Ismail, the latter told him that a number of his female relatives said that Iraqi Shiite women from wealthy families had befriended Jordanian women and, over a period of time, tried to convert them to Shiism. Along similar lines, Umar Shahin, a resident of al-Zarqa, told an *al-Ghad* reporter that some of his friends were converted by Iraqi Shiites who had come to stay in Jordan but traveled to the Zaynabiyya Hawza in Damascus in order to study the Shiite creed.

The same newspaper also reported that the security services are aware of a number of Shiite religious authorities who live in Jordan and influence both Iraqi Shiites and a growing number of Jordanian converts. One of these lives in the al-Hashimi al-Shimali neighborhood and offers teaching on Shiism in his home. Muhammad Khizai, an Iraqi Shiite who came to Jordan from Damascus, tried to establish a Shiite center, but the Jordanian security services deported him as soon as he arrived.

One of the most prominent Jordanian converts to Shiism is Marwan Khalifat, a young man from Kafr Jayiz by Irbid, who converted during his studies at Sharia College, where he graduated in 1995. He then went on to study in the city of Qom in Iran and in the Zaynabiyya Hawza in Syria. He currently lives in Sweden. He is the author of a well-known book, *Wa-rakibtu al-safina* (*I Rode the Ship*), published by al-Ghadir in 1997. In this book he relates the disputes and dialogues that accompanied his conversion to the Shiite creed, the role played by a Shiite friend of his in this conversion, and the impact on his beliefs made by Shiite books that criticized the Sunni faith.[12]

Another prominent convert to Shiism is Hasan al-Saqqaf, an elder of the Ashari school and a prominent academic. He adopted the Jafari Shiite creed in the wake of a sharp dispute with the Salafists. The latter have written a number of books attacking his views; prominent among these are Ghalib al-Saqi's two books, *al-Isif fi al-kashf an Haqiqat al-Saqqaf* (*Relief in Exposing the Truth about al-Saqqaf*) and *Kashf al-ghumma fi al-tahdhir min taaddi al-Saqqaf ala ulama al-umma* (*Removing the Veil in Warning against al-Saqqaf's Attack on the Nation's Learned Men*). Both books have been distributed free of charge. Al-Saqqaf also wrote a number of books in response to these Salafist attacks against him, the best-known of which is a book on the Wahhabi Salafists, which has been translated into English. Yet another prominent Jordanian convert to Shiism is attorney Ahmad Husayn Yaqub from Jerash. He was born into a Shafii family in 1939 and studied law at Damascus University. According to his own account, he converted to Shiism following a stay in Beirut, where he read a number of Shiite books that convinced him to adopt the creed.[13]

Shiite students from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman also study in Jordan. Although their religious mentors warn them not to proclaim their faith in public, they often attempt to make individual conversions among their Jordanian friends and associates.

THE IRAQI SHIITES IN JORDAN CELEBRATE THEIR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS, such as the Day of Ashura, the birthdays and death-anniversaries of Shiite imams, the Day of Ghadir, and others. The ceremonies and celebrations take place in a number of places. Some are held in private homes, often in underground chambers, especially in the lower-class neighborhoods where many of the Shiites live, such as the well-known al-Mahatta quarter.

According to reports, a number of husayniyyas[14] have been established by Iraqi Shiites in the Jabal Amman al-Sharqiyya neighborhood for small groups wishing to avoid unwanted attention. There are reports of husayniyyas in areas such as al-Nazha and al-Ashrafiyya, attended by Jordanian converts to Shiism, who come to read Husayn's biography and sing religious hymns. One of the best known of these husayniyyas was in Jabal al-Jawfa before its imam, Ali al-Sabari, was arrested by the Jordanian security forces, interrogated and expelled from the country.

Some Shiite ceremonies and celebrations take place in lower-class restaurants run by Iraqi Shiites such as the "al-Azaim," the "Tannur al-Habayib" and the "al-Bash." Shiites gather in these restaurants on religious occasions and hold commemorative ceremonies. They may also watch films about the specific religious occasions being observed and recite elegiac poems such as those written in memory of the death of Husayn on the Day of Ashura.[15] In some instances, a wealthy Shiite will rent an entire restaurant on a holiday and serve the food there free of charge. The only dish cooked on these occasions is *harisa*, which is made of cooked meat and bulgur. Celebrations sometimes are also held in the public parks near the Roman amphitheater and in Hashemite Square. In 2006, a number of Iraqi Shiites filtered into these two places and performed their religious rites, although with a great deal of circumspection.

Shiite holy days are also observed at the mausoleum of Jafar b. Abi Talib,[16] the Prophet's cousin—also known as Jafar al-Tayyar ("Flying Jafar")—who was killed at the battle of Muta in 629 CE, one of the most important conflicts in the Prophet's lifetime. The mausoleum is located in the southern province of al-Karak, at al-Muta, in an area known as "the southern sanctuary" (c. 160 km south of the capital Amman). The Jordanian authorities have built a large mosque at the site, funded by the Iranian government at a time when the number of Shiite pilgrims to Jordan burgeoned because Iranians were unable to visit Iraqi shrines for two decades during the Iraq-Iran war and its aftermath.

Thousands of Iraqi and Iranian pilgrims come to perform the Ashura rites and others at Jafar's mausoleum. On these public occasions the Jordanian authorities guard the site under the motto of "religious tourism." The Iranian pilgrims also visit the institute and university of Al al-bayt ("The Prophet's family"), founded by Prince Hasan b. Talal. This site houses some of the most ancient extant Shiite manuscripts and books, along with numerous studies whose objective is to bring Sunnis and Shiites closer together. The residents of al-Karak and Muta have sometimes used force to prevent Iraqis from visiting the shrine and the authorities have been compelled to intervene.

Iraqi Shiites in Jordan have attempted to purchase property near Jafar's Shrine and register it in the name of Jordanian citizens. Remarkably, the shrine is not furnished with any amenities. In the past it even lacked rugs, and people could not sit there for long periods of time. Near the shrine, vendors offer pictures of Shiite personalities such as the Imam Khomeini, Hassan Nasrallah, Muqtada al-Sadr and others, in addition to videos of *latmiyya* ceremonies and the story of the death of Husayn. In the same area "Husseini soil" is sold. [17] The soil is brought in from Iraq, in clods of various shapes: round, rectangular, octagonal or square. Shiites sit on this soil during their prayers.

In the early 1980s, Iran offered to construct the shrine of Jafar, including tourist facilities, at its own expense. However, the last King Hussein (d. 1999) rejected the offer, even though accepting it might well have brought up to a million Iranian tourists to Jordan annually. Later the Jordanian government itself constructed the mausoleum as part of a national project of building shrines over the tombs of the Prophet's Companions.

THE QUDS PRESS NEWS AGENCY HAS REPORTED THAT A NUMBER OF IRAQI Shiite businessmen have applied to the Jordanian Ministry of Religious Endowments (Waqf) for permission to erect the first Shiite mosque and husayniyya in Jordan and to found an association called "al-imam al-Husayn." The site chosen for the construction of the mosque and husayniyya is in the Abdun quarter, one of Amman's more exclusive areas, located in the southern part of the capital. The American Embassy is located in the same neighborhood.

However, at the time of this writing there are no signs that Jordan will give an official permit to build on the property, whose value is estimated at over three million dollars. In fact, the former Jordanian Minister of the Interior, Id al-Fayiz, stated that the Jordanian government would never permit anyone to exploit the climate of pluralism in Jordan and work against the country's national unity. This statement came in the wake of declarations by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, in which they expressed their worries that the government might approve the construction of the husayniyya.

In fact, the Jordanian Minister of Religious Endowments and Islamic Holy Sites, Abd al-Fattah Salah, has denied that any Iraqi group or person has requested the Ministry's permission to establish a husayniyya or Shiite mosque in Jordan. His statement followed media reports that the Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, on a recent visit to Jordan, asked for permission to build at least one husayniyya in the capital Amman, so that Iraqi Shiites would have a place to carry out rituals that differ from those of the local Shiites. The same sources added that al-Sadr claimed such a step would help strengthen the ties between the Iraqi and Jordanian peoples. Previously, the Ministry of Religious Endowments had refused permission to construct a Shiite mosque or a husayniyya in western Amman. Although initial permission was granted by the Ministry, it was revoked in January 2006, under still-unclear circumstances. The request was made by an Iraqi businessman living in Jordan, who offered to construct a large Shiite mosque at his own expense.

The Jordanian authorities thus apparently believe that providing official permission to construct a husayniyya in Amman would give Shiism the status of an officially recognized creed, thereby encouraging conversion to Shiism.

THE CONVERSION OF JORDANIANS TO SHIISM HAS BEGUN TO AROUSE BOTH official and unofficial concern in that country. A number of compelling factors have made Shiism attractive to Jordanians—and indeed, for Arab Sunnis as a whole. One of these is the political vacuum created by official Arab regimes, including the Jordanian regime, which have failed to confront the major issues concerning Arabs everywhere: e.g., the Palestinian problem, Iraq and Lebanon. Arab regimes are perceived as serving the interest of a pro-Israel United States, instead of giving support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Iraqi insurgents in their struggle against the American occupation. The Arab man-in-the-street feels that his government lends support to the siege against the Palestinian people, creating a growing gap between subjects and rulers in Arab countries with Sunni majorities.

Iran has been quick to fill this vacuum by offering the Arabs of the Middle East a carefully crafted popular political and cultural message. Iran's political adroitness was clearly evident during the 2006 Lebanon War and in the dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The Arab masses were made to forget Shiite Iran's collusion with America in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and they now perceive Iran as the primary champion of the Arabs and the Muslim world. Hezbollah's successes against Israel in southern Lebanon also had a great influence; the organization is seen as the bearer of Arab hopes to retrieve their honor and national will.

In fact, the honor of the Arab peoples, which according to popular opinion has

been disgraced by the policies of the Arab governments, has been redeemed by "Shiite achievements" in the struggle against America and Israel. For many Arabs, who ask themselves how it is that the Shiites do what the Arab peoples think should be done, the answer is to be found in Shiite culture and literature, which, so they believe, contain the key to understanding the causes of power, influence and success.

Sunni youth in Jordan do not possess the authoritative sources and debating skills of their Shiite counterparts, and therefore find themselves in an unequal confrontation in which the Shiites usually dominate. When one considers the poor religious education of many Sunnis together with the way many Arab regimes treat their own subjects, it is no wonder that conversion to Shiism is on the rise.

In Jordan the regime's behavior and the lack of religious culture has produced a particularly fertile ground in which conversion to Shiism can flourish. Consequently, the Iraqi Shiites in Jordan have penetrated every stratum of Jordanian society and proven themselves capable of holding their own in political and cultural debates with Jordanians. The anti-American feelings of many Jordanians also contributed to the wave of conversion to Shiism, especially in light of the proven Shiite capacity for action, as shown by the success of Hezbollah and of Iran's nuclear program. Hamas, which is also very popular among Jordanians, has played an important role in alleviating anti-Iranian feelings as well, since many Jordanians are grateful for Iranian aid to Hamas. As a result, Jordanians first become political adherents of Shiism; they then may also adopt the Shiite religious creed.

Future developments depend to a large extent on the actions and behavior of the Jordanian government, on how the conflict between America and Iran evolves, and on political events in Iraq. If Iraq stabilizes, most of the Iraqis now living in Jordan will return home, and the direct contact that now occurs between Jordanians and Iraqi Shiites will come to an end. If the Iraqi problem is solved, the attraction of Shiism for Sunnis will perhaps wane as well, because Shiism's present good reputation in the region owes much to its anti-American stand. If Shiites and America end their state of conflict, conversion to Shiism in Jordan will in all likelihood decline. To put the matter succinctly, future political developments in the region will determine the future of conversion to Shiism in Jordan. This will especially remain the case for as long as the official policies of Arab states do not take their own peoples' wishes into account.

NOTES

1. The newspaper *al-Bayyina*, issue 478, August 12, 2007.
2. The "fifth" is the proportion of every Shiite's income, from whatever source, which he is required to give to the community. Shiites divide the "fifth" into six parts: one part to God, one to the

prophets, one to relatives, one to orphans, one to the poor, and one to wayfarers. The first three parts, God's, the prophets' and relatives,' are considered to belong to the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*). Fully half of the "fifth" thus goes to the imams and their families. For more details on the "fifth" in the Shiite faith see: Calder, N., "Khums in Imami Shii Jurisprudence from the Tenth to the Sixteenth Century A.D," *BSOAS* (1982), 1-45; Sachededina Abudulaziz "Al-Khums: The Fifth in the Imami Shii Legal System" *JNES* 39 (1980), 275-289.

3. See the Thaqlin website, www.althqlin.net/forum/showthread.php?t=13565.
4. Riya Manour, "al-Shiia fi al-Urdunn," *al-Madina* (Saudi Arabia), 22, February 2007.
5. An Iraqi satellite television channel, which broadcasts at present from Ajman. It began its broadcasts on July 20, 2004 and is registered in Dubai. It employs about 40 media professionals in addition to the management. Al-Fayhaa broadcasts various programs in addition to the news. For more details see the station's website, http://alfayhaa.tv.
6. A subscription Shiite satellite station broadcasting from Kuwait, where it is licensed. It broadcasts Shiite religious programs, especially on the self-infliction ceremonies in the months of Muharram and Safar. For more details see the station's website, www.alanwartv.com. .
7. A Shiite station which broadcasts from Iran. Its Arabic program first went on the air in 1980, when it was called the Sahar channel and broadcast one hour a day. Today it broadcasts eighteen hours daily. For more details see the station's website, www.alkawthar.ir.
8. The Islamic satellite channel Ahl al-bayt broadcasts from Karbala. It began operating on October 14, 2005. For more details see the station's website, www.ahlulbayt.com.
9. Hezbollah founded this Shiite channel in Lebanon in 1991. Since the year 2000 it has been broadcasting 24/7. It has hundreds of employees and broadcasts worldwide. For more details on the station see Dina Matar "What It Means to Be Shiite in Lebanon: Al-Manar and the Imagined Community of Resistance," Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture 2006 (University of Westminster, London) vol. 3(2): 22-40.
10. Muhammad Abu Rumman, "al-Tashayyu fi al-Urdunn" ("Conversion to Shiism in Jordan"), *al-Ghad* (a Jordanian newspaper), October 4-5, 2006.
11. For details see: Mustafa Bazzi, *Jabal Amil fi muitihi al-arabi* (*Jabal Amil in its Arab Surroundings*), (Beirut: Research and Documentation Center of the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, al-Rihani publications, 1993), p. 211; idem, *Bint Jbel ÎaÃirat Jabal Amil* (*Bint Jbel Capital of the Jabal Amil Region*), (Beirut: Dar al-amir lil-thaqafa wal-ulum, 1998), pp. 498-499.
12. Muhammad Abu Rumman, "al-Tashayyu fi al-Urdunn," *al-Ghad*, October 4-5, 2006.
13. *Ibid*.
14. *Husayniyya*: a Shiite building used for holding the annual commemorative services in remembrance of the death of al-Husyan b. Ali. The fact that Shiites have a specific structure just for this purpose shows the importance they attach to Husayn's death and its commemoration. Most of the husayniyyas in the Shiite holy cities are also used as pilgrim hostels, free of charge. The various husayniyyas are usually named after the people of the city who founded them, such as the Esfahani husayniyya, the Teherani husayniyya, and so on. Husayniyyas of this type can be found in the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Mashhad, and elsewhere. They are not considered mosques, and do not have the restrictions on visitors that the latter have, especially concerning entry by non-Muslims. In some areas of Lebanon they are called *al-nadi al-Husayni* ("Hussein Club"), such as the one in Tyre in southern Lebanon. In the Persian Gulf area, husayniyyas are known as "al-matam" ("funeral rites"). In Bahrain, for example, there are today some 3,500 "maatim Husayniyya," reflecting the frequency with which they are used. In India and Pakistan they are called "imam bareh" ("the imam's center"),

i.e., the center of the imam al-Husayn. The buildings themselves do not have any constant shape. Some husayniyyas have large, mosque-like spaces while others are more like lecture halls, with rows of chairs and a raised dais in front. The former type is common in Iraq, Kuwait and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf region while the second type is frequently encountered in Lebanon. There are separate husayniyyas for women in Lebanon, the Gulf and elsewhere. Some husayniyyas stand by themselves and others are attached to mosques. The oldest extant husayniyya is the "Imam Dalan" husayniyya in Dacca, Bangladesh, which was constructed in 1642 CE. The husayniyyas play an important religious, social, political and cultural role. Since the beginning of the 20th century they have functioned as social and cultural clubs where people meet and exchange views and information. They are especially active during religious holidays. For more details see the author's paper: Sindawi, K., "The Husayni Sermon (al-Khutba al-husayniyya) in Shiite Literature: Development, Structure, Venue, Preachers' Titles," *Orientalia Suecana* 54 (2005), 151-178.

15. These poems are called *latmiyya* in Iraq, Bahrain and Kuwait, because those who attend the reading of these poems beat (*latm* in Arabic) their chests in grief. The latmiyya poems are recited during the day and at night on numerous occasions in the Shiite calendar, especially the death-anniversaries of the imams and Fatima. The most important occasion is the anniversary of the death of Husayn in the month of Muharram. Then Shiites gather together in a single procession, headed by a reciter of verses (called *radud* in colloquial Iraqi Arabic, because he repeats the elegiac lines of poetry to the crowd beating themselves) who relates the catastrophes which have befallen the Prophet's family.
16. He was the brother of Ali b. Talib. He died after both his hands were cut off in battle.
17. For more on "Husseini soil" and its uses see the author's paper: Sindawi, K., "Holy Earth: The Importance of the Land of Karbala for the Shia," *Islamic Culture* 77(3) (2003), 73-84.

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ARE THERE ANY SHI'ITE MUSLIMS IN ISRAEL?*

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the question of whether there are Shi'ite Muslims living in Israel today. In the State of Israel, there are 1,157,000 Muslims who reside mainly in the Galilee, in the Triangle and in the Negev. The Muslim population is mostly Sunni, and the question is whether there are also Shi'ite Muslims living among them. There is a very small number of residents in the State of Israel who are Shi'ite Muslims belonging to the Imami Shi'ite trend. Before the establishment of the State of Israel there were seven Shi'ite villages in the eastern and western parts of the upper Galilee region. There are also remnants of Shi'ite families living in the country, especially in Nazareth and also in Haifa, as well as scores of Shi'ites from Southern Lebanon who had served in the 'South Lebanese Army' (SLA). When the Israeli army retreated from Lebanon in the year 2000, some of

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them came to reside in the Galilee and they follow a religious-Shi'ite way of life. Moreover, in recent years, there have appeared signs of a budding Shi'ite missionary movement on a very small scale. This article will discuss the issue of the Shi'ite presence in Israel from various perspectives.

Historical Background

The Shi'a (literally the 'sect', which is that of Ali the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, who was also the fourth Caliph) began as a political group in the 7th century, and in a process that continued for three centuries, become a group with a well-formed religious ideology that is distinct from Sunni Islam.

Various Shi'ite trends that had emerged during the Middle Ages disappeared from the stage of history. The main ones that remained until our day are the Zaydis (concentrated mainly in the Yemen), the Ismailiyya (with its various sects represented in the Indian sub-continent and in East Africa), and the Imamiyya[1] (comprising the majority in Iran and in Southern Iraq, and also represented in the Indian sub-continent, in Afghanistan, in Lebanon, and in other places).

The accepted view that the Imamiyya is the main Shi'ite trend is based on a number of facts. Numerically speaking, the Imamiyya constituted, at least from the 16th century onwards, an absolute majority among the Shi'a (their number is estimated as being between 60–90 million). The Imamiyya played an active role in the central regions of the Muslim world. At first, one could not speak about the Shi'a as a separate, distinct body, since there was no single united group. There were a number of groups that shared in common the support for the descendants of Ali as the legitimate rulers of the Muslim community. Each Shi'ite group named a different figure in the family.

It should be noted that most of the Muslim world was Sunni. The Shi'ites today constitute more than 10 percent of all the Muslims in the world. (They are prominent mainly in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon; they are an absolute majority among the Muslims in Iran, Bahrain and Iraq; in Lebanon they comprise 40–45 percent of the population). They represent an independent and unique trend in Islam, even though they have always been the minority, and have had a decisive influence on Islamic history.

1 They are also called the Ithna-'Ashriyya (Twelvers) in order to distinguish them from the other Shi'ite sects. These Shi'ites believe in the leadership of twelve Imams after the death of Muhammad, and are also called Ja'fari Shi'ites, named after the Sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765). For the sake of simplicity the Imamiyya will hereafter be called the Shi'ites. For details about the Imamiyya Shi'ites, see Kohlberg (1983: 109–126); Hodgson (1955: 1–13); Jafri (1979); Momen (1985).

The differences between Sunnis and Shi'ites in religious law are not great. The difference between the two communities is theological and political. The Shi'ites believe that the Imams are descended from Ali Ibn Abu Talib (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad) who was murdered in 661 CE, who was the sole legitimate heir of Muhammad. The Imams did not reach the same level of prophecy as the Prophet Muhammad, but were superior to ordinary men. They were gifted with superhuman qualities and attributes, such as impeccability (*'isma*) and the special knowledge given only to the intimate friends of God. These qualities made them a model for imitation (similar to the Prophet Muhammad) and leaders that demanded from the believer absolute loyalty and devotion. Loyalty to the Imams involved total negation of those opposed to the Imams, first and foremost those whom the Shi'ites consider as having stolen the heritage of Ali, especially the three first Caliphs that Sunni Islam regarded as outstanding examples of charity and God-fearing devotion. For the Shi'ites the three first Caliphs are condemned as sinners and heretics, and among other things caused a falsification of the Quran and deleted the verses that explicitly referred to or implied praise of Ali and his family.

The Palestinian Muslim Community in Israel

In the State of Israel there are 1,157,000 Muslims that comprise 16 percent of the total population and 83 percent of the Arab population.[2] They reside mainly in the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev. The Muslim population is mostly Sunni, and the question arises whether there are any Muslims of the Shi'ite community living amongst them.

It can already be said in advance that there is a very small number of residents in the state of Israel that are Shi'ite Muslims belonging to the Imamiyya trend. But we must first clarify that, prior to the establishment of Israel, there were seven Shi'ite villages in the eastern and western parts of the upper Galilee region. (These will be described in detail later on). In addition, the residents of Ghajar village situated between the upper Galilee and the Golan Heights – are sometimes regarded as belonging to the Ismailiyya Shi'ite sect, even though this claim is untrue. They are actually Nusayri-Alawis, and their religion is a syncretic one in which the principles of faith and cultic practices from various religions are merged together, included pagan elements that have a strong affinity with Shi'a Islam.[3]

2 See the statistical data for Israel in 2006 on the Internet website: http://wwwl.cbs.gov.il/shnaton57/st02_01.pdf.

3 For details about the Nusayri-Alawi religion, see Dussaud (1990); Bar-Asher and Kofsky (2002).

There are also some remaining members of Shi'ite families belonging to the Imamiyya trend who live in the Galilee, especially in Nazareth and Haifa, as well as scores of Shi'ites who had served in the South Lebanese Army (SLA) between the years 1976 until the retreat of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) from Lebanon in the year 2000 and the collapse of the SLA. Some of them reside today in the Galilee and conduct a religious Shi'ite way of life. In addition, there are early signs of a Shi'ite missionary movement on a very small scale.

I. The Shi'ite Community in Pre-1948 Palestine: Seven Shi'ite Villages in the Upper Galilee[4]

The marking of the border between Lebanon and mandatory Palestine, which was carried out in a number of stages, was a complex and sensitive process since it involved competition between the two powers – France and Britain – each of whom tried to expand the area under its sovereignty. Between March 1921 and February 1922, the famous Franco-British committee under Paulet and Newcombe was active. The committee deviated from the previous agreement (1920) because of the conditions of the area and moved the border mainly in the area between Metulla and the mouth of the Yarmuk, as well as between Metulla and Rosh Hanikra. By doing so, it incorporated about twenty-two villages within the Mandatory borders of Palestine that the agreement of 1920 had placed within Lebanon. Of these villages, twelve were Sunni, three were Christian, one was half Sunni and half Greek Catholic, and six were Shi'ite (Hunin, Qadas, Nabi Yusha', Salha, Tarbikha, al-Malkiya), and one was half Shi'ite and half Greek Catholic (Abil al-Qamh). The villages were located in the upper Galilee and in the Hula Valley.

France conducted a population census in Lebanon in 1921 before the Paulet-Newcombe committee had finished its work, and granted Lebanese citizenship to the inhabitants of the villages mentioned above, and thus complicated the situation. When the new border agreement was signed at the beginning of 1923, and the project of marking the borders with all its legal aspects was completed in 1926, the residents of these villages lost their Lebanese citizenship and instead received Palestinian nationality as residents under the British Mandate.[5] So that, whether

4 For details on the seven Shi'ite villages in the Galilee, see '*Al-Qura al-Janubiyya al-Sab': Dirasa Wathaiqiyya Shamila* [Seven Southern Villages: A Comprehensive Documentary Study] (Beirut: Muassat al-Wafa, 1984 [Arabic]).

5 See paragraph 10 in: *Agreement between Palestine and Syria and Lebanon to Facilitate Good Neighbourly Relations in Connection with Frontier Questions*, 2 February 1926. See also on the ceremony for the transfer of the areas to the British Mandate and the tour of the British Governor of the North in the new territories, including the Shi'ite villages, in Toye (1998: 3:521–525).

they wanted to or not, they became members of the national Palestinian community that was taking shape.

During the period of the British Mandate, Britain conducted a comprehensive population census in 1931 and 4,100 Shi'ites were numbered in the villages mentioned above. The census recorder wrote that the surveyors were surprised to find so many Shi'ites within the Mandate area.[6] In fact, the number was not high since the Arabs in the country numbered 800,000 at the time of the census.

The 1948 war led to the destruction of the seven villages, even though for a brief moment it seems that their Shi'ite identity could have saved them. In August 1948 some of the Hunin village notables wanted to draw up a peace agreement with Kfar Giladi and the state of Israel in general. According to the report of the Department of Minorities, a meeting was held in a very good atmosphere, with the notables of Hunin promising to live as loyal citizens to the State of Israel and totally renounce Arab national aspirations in the country. The Jewish representatives at the meeting saw this in a positive light for several reasons. Firstly, they said that advantage could be taken of the tense relations between Sunnis and Shi'ites both within the country and even more so in Lebanon for the benefit of the state of Israel. Moreover, good relations with the Shi'ites could lead in the future to an extension of the borders as had already occurred in the past. A friendly population in South Lebanon could also serve as a broad market for Israeli products. In effect, the report stated, such a small minority of 4700 persons would not be an economic burden on the Jewish state, and therefore they should welcome the outstretched hand for peace. Bekhor Shitreet, the Minister for Minorities, sent letters of warm persuasion to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, and expressed his support for this policy. He portrayed the inhabitants of Hunin village and the other Shi'ites in the country as a friendly population that had maintained good relations with the surrounding Jewish settlements during the Mandate period.[7] But in spite of all this, the fate of Hunin was the same as that of the other villages in the area, both Shi'ite and non-Shi'ite.

At the time when the discussions with Kfar Giladi were being held, most of the inhabitants of Hunin were residing across the border, taking refuge in Shi'ite villages in Lebanon. When this attempt failed, the remaining inhabitants also fled to south Lebanon. The pattern of their

6 Mills (1933: 81). The census of 1922 numbered 156 Shi'ites within the borders of Mandate Palestine: 3 in Gaza, 3 in Majd el-Krum, 150 in al-Basa.

7 Israel State Archives, 49/310/36, Department of Minorities, Minister of Minorities to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, 18 August 1948. It is interesting that in the report Shitreet was completely mistaken in noting the names of the Shi'ite villages in question, and instead named Shi'ite villages that were in Lebanese territory.

flight shows that they had warm relations with the Shi'ite community on the other side of the border. Their appeal to the government of Lebanon, as it appeared in the Lebanese press, also indicates that they considered this state as having authority over them. It seems that none of the Shi'ite inhabitants fled inwards into Israel and that they all fled northwards and found refuge among the Shi'ite population in south Lebanon. It was quite natural that they should link themselves to the members of their Shi'ite community and not to those of the Sunni or Christian villages in Lebanon or in the state of Israel that was being formed. Apparently some of the Christian inhabitants of Abil al-Qamh also fled to Lebanon.

When the fighting stopped, a group of them appealed to the Israeli government to allow them to return to their villages, but their request was denied.[8] In effect, as can be derived from the research of Benny Morris, the Jewish forces did not have mercy on the villages in the region including the seven Shi'ite villages. In one of them, Salha, a massacre was conducted of elderly people, up to seventy of the village inhabitants, during the Hiram operation (Morris 2000: 85–6, 139, 141–8). The description of the event that led to the expulsion of the Hunin residents corresponds to the research conclusions of Morris. It is difficult to determine for certain what exactly occurred on that day, but the Israeli version given as the excuse for the expulsion: 'While our unit was retreating near the village of Hunin, a number of shots were fired at it', is a weak one. It seems that the Jewish forces were engaged in battle, but not with the village inhabitants, and they entered Hunin and did what they did as revenge for what they had suffered. We cannot know what would have happened if the friendly agreement with Hunin had been realised, and if so, whether they would have exempted all the Shi'ite villages as requested by the Minister of Minorities, Bekhor Shitreet. But it is interesting to speculate what might have happened if matters had gone that way. Would a thriving Shi'ite-Palestinian community have been created within the borders of the state of Israel and have existed until today? Would the relations between Israel and Lebanon have been influence by this? (Kaufman 2006: 694).

The Shi'ites of the seven villages were conquered by the State of Israel in the Hiram operation during the war of 1948, and their inhabitants fled to Lebanon.

It should be noted that although these seven villages are located today south of the international border between Israel and Lebanon, various factions, including Hizbullah, demand that they be returned to Lebanese control on the basis of the 1920 border. Since the 1990s, and especially

8 Israel State Archives 49/300/31, Yaakov Shimoni to the Department of Minorities, 15 February 1949.

since the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Lebanon in 2000, these seven villages have been mentioned in Hizbullah leader Hasan Nasrallah's speeches with ever greater frequency, as a factor for the continuation of the armed struggle against Israel. This issue is often mentioned in connection with the issue of the Shib'a farms. Nasrallah insisted on this issue in May 2000 when he was asked about the position of Hizbullah with regard to the seven villages. His reply was: 'We asked the Lebanese government to demand its right to take control once again over these villages because we consider them to be Lebanese. Therefore they have to be returned to the sovereignty of the Lebanese government. If the French gave them to the British, who gave them to Israel, this agreement has no legal validity'.[9]

As for the position of the village inhabitants themselves, it is difficult to assess their feelings about this matter, both because there are today over 20,000 of them, and also because there is no way to find out what they feel since access to them is barred. From the bits and pieces of information that appear in the Lebanese press and on the internet, it appears that their opinions are divided. The granting of full Lebanese citizenship to the inhabitants of these seven villages since 1994, after it was confirmed by the Lebanese parliament at the initiative of Hizbullah, was a highly significant development for them because it improved their quality of life dramatically. They can now work without limitations, be owners of private property inheritable by their children, travel and take trips freely, and in general live a normal life in Lebanon. In spite of the fact that they had received Lebanese citizenship, most of them still demand to be included in the framework of the Palestinian right of return, at least formally. Some of them claim that they had always been Lebanese while others emphasise their Palestinian identity. It seems that their national affiliation depends to a great degree on their experience of life. For example, a PLO activist, a refugee from one of the villages, testified in 1994 that he would never accept Lebanese citizenship since he was a Palestinian body and soul.[10] On the other hand, Muhammad al-Barjawi[11] of Hunin village, a former Hizbullah representative in the Lebanese parliament, underwent a process of Lebanisation through his Lebanese Shi'ite organisational activities. He and others like him regard the 1994 law of citizenship as the correction of an historical error.

9 *Middle East Insight*, 2 February 2000. Another version of the interview can be found in *The Washington Post*, 20 February 2000.

10 http://almashriq.hiof.no/general/300/320/327/fafo/reports/FAFO177/3_2.html.

11 It is interesting to note that a member of the al-Barjawi family was the Imam of the village and a member of the Hunin delegation that in 1948 had wanted to draw up a friendly agreement with Kfar Giladi. For details, see: Israel State Archives, 49/310/36, Department of Minorities, Minister of Minorities to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, 18 August 1948.

Shi'ite villages in the Upper Galilee in 1948

	Village name	*No. of residents*	*No. of houses*	*Israeli settlements on village land*	*Distribution of residents*	*Present place of residents*
1	Abil al-Qamh/ Marj al-Qamh	(1931) 230	68	Kfar Yoval	2/3 Shi'ites 1/3 Christia ns	al-Ramaylah, al-Aysat al-Majdiyya, Kafr Kila, al-Khayam, Deir Mimas
2	Tarbikha	1000	233	Moshav Shomera, Zar'it, Shtula	Shi'ites	Majdal Zun, Zibqin, 'Ayta al-Sha'b, Ramiya, Marwahin
3	Hunin	1620	233	Moshav Margaliot	Shi'ites	Markaba, al-Nabatiya, Hula
4	Nabi Yusha'	81	12	Metzudat Koah, Moshav Ramot Naftali	Shi'ites	Mays al-Jabal, Shaqra', al-Shihabiya
5	Salha	(1945) 1070	142	Kibbutz Yar'on	Shi'ites	Bint Jubayl, Marun al-Ras,Yarun, 'Aytarun
6	Qadas	(1945) 390	56	Kibbutz Yiftah	Shi'ites	Kunin, Mays al-Jabal, Barish, Juwayya, Shaqra', 'Aynatha, Majad Salim
7	Malkiya	(1945) 360	48	Kibbutz Malkiya	Shi'ites	'Aytarun, Bint Jubayl, Baffle, Juwayya, Tibnin, al-Nafakhiya
	Total	4751 persons				

II. Shi'ite Remnants in the Galilee and in Haifa after the 1948 Nakba

Before the establishment of the State of Israel, the borders with Lebanon were open, and many Shi'ites, mainly those living in south Lebanon, came to Palestine and engaged in trade. Some of them settled in the country and even formed marital ties with Palestinian residents. After the establishment of the State of Israel, this Shi'ite channel of communication naturally ceased to exist. Today one can point to a number of remaining families living in the Galilee who are of a Shi'ite background and originated in south Lebanon. Although they no longer conduct a religious Shi'ite way of life, before the establishment of Israel they used to observe Shi'ite religious ceremonies and customs in full.

In my interview of 11 January 2007 with the Shi'ite 'Abbas Zayn al-Din, a resident of Nazareth and living today in Haifa, who comes from the village of Safad al-Batikh in south Lebanon, he told me that before the establishment of Israel, the Shi'ites in Nazareth used to perform the ceremony of the 'Ashura (the 10th of the Muslim month Muharram which is by tradition the annual memorial day of the assassination of Husayn Ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who was murdered by the Umayyads in 680 in Karbala).[12] A professional preacher (Khatib Husayni)[13] used to arrive from south Lebanon in order to deliver the 'Ashura sermon according to the Shi'ite rules of recitation. All Shi'ite families in the country on this occasion used to cook a special dish (containing wheat) in honour of this day, and they also fasted on this day as do all the Shi'ites.

12 The Sh'ites have been marking the Karbala event for centuries by the ceremony of ta'ziya (literally expressions of sympathy, mourning and consolation). As a dramatic form it has its origins in the Shi'ite month of Muharram processions commemorating Husayn's martyrdom and throughout its evolution the representation of the siege and carnage at Karbala has remained its centrepoint. Ta'ziya has never lost its religious implications. Because early Shi'ites viewed Husayn's death as a sacred redemptive act, the performance of the Muharram ceremonies was believed to be an aid to salvation; later they also believed that participation, both by actors and spectators, in the Ta'ziya dramas would gain them Husayn's intercession on the day of the Last Judgment). The ta'ziya ceremonies include a re-enactment of the battle, the recitation of dirges, and a mourning procession during which they used to beat themselves with swords, knives and iron chains on the chest and back until they bled (today the authorities in most places only allow moderate self-infliction. The city of Karbala itself (about 100 km southwest of Baghdad today) has become a place of pilgrimage (competing in importance with Mecca), the place of burial for Shi'ite sages, and the stronghold of Shi'ite devotion. For details on the 'Ashura day', see Sindawi (2001: 200–214); Ayoub (1978).

13 For a wide and many-sided discussion on the preacher Husayni and his sanctioning among the Shi'a, see Sindawi (2005: 151–178).

Distribution of Shi'ite families in the Galilee and their places of residence

Family	*No. of persons*	*Settlement in the Galilee*	*Original settlement in Lebanon*
Ayoub	11	Nazareth	Habush
al-Bazzi	7	Nazareth	Bint Jubayl
Iskandar	20	Kafr Mazra'a	Tyre City (Sour)
Dahir	8	Nazareth	Zibqin
Zayn al-Din	11	Nazareth and Haifa	Jumayjima, Safad, al-Batikh
Hanini	80	Nazareth	Majdal Salim
Tabaja	8	Kafr Kana	Tyre City (Sour)
Nasir al-Din	50	Shafa'amr and Haifa	Tyre City (Sour)
Nur al-Din (Hashim)	18	Nazareth and Haifa	Kafr al-Ma'rub, Shihabiya
'Alawiyya	10	Nazareth	Marun al-Ras, Sin al-Fil neighbourhood (Beirut)
Total	223 persons		

Shi'ite families that left the country for Lebanon after the 1948 war

Family	*Place of residents in Israel*	*Place of settlement in Lebanon*
Unknown	Haifa	Baydun
Zibqin	Nazareth	Dahir
Khirbat Salim	Nazareth	Sa'id
al-Khayyam	Nazareth	'Abdallah

III. Shi'ite families in the Galilee: Residents of South Lebanon who served in the SLA[14]

The South Lebanese Army (SLA)[15] was the militia that was set up by the State of Israel after the Israeli army vacated south Lebanon following the Litani Campaign of 1978 and transferred the area to the forces under the command of the Lebanese colonels Sa'ad Haddad and Sami Shidiaq so that they could act together with the UN and give backing to Israeli support. The core members of the SLA were Christian soldiers, but it also included units of Sunni, Druze and Shi'ite soldiers. After the Lebanon War of 1982 the number of Shi'ites in the SLA increased, and during the 1990s comprised the majority. The SLA acted in south Lebanon under

14 I wish to thank Mr Sa'ad Altari, a former resident of south Lebanon now living in the village of Jish (Gush Halav) in the Upper Galilee, who has assisted me greatly in gathering data about the Shi'ites of south Lebanon who had served in the South Lebanese Army under Israeli protection during the years 1978–2000 and some of whom now reside in Israel.

15 For details about the South Lebanese Army, see Danguri (1998); Hamizrahi (1984).

Israeli control over the area from the end of the 1970s until the retreat from Lebanon in May 2000. After the IDF retreat from Lebanon, the SLA collapsed and many of the soldiers and their families crossed over the border into Israel for fear of Hizbullah. Today many of the SLA fighters live in Israel, some of them even with Israeli citizenship. The officer corps especially chose to continue to remain within the area of Israel for fear of being condemned to death in Lebanon. Some of them have gone to European countries, mainly Germany, and many others, mainly private soldiers, returned in 2002 to their homes in south Lebanon.

The Shi'ites in the SLA who crossed the border into Israel with their families numbered about 500 persons, but within two years nearly 400 went to Germany, those remaining in Israel live mainly in the upper and western Galilee. They number about 100 persons as detailed in the table below:

Shi'ite families in the Galilee (Residents of South Lebanon who served in the SLA)

Family	*No. of Persons*	*Residence in the Galilee*	*Original settlement in Lebanon*
al-Sayyid	7	Carmiel	'Aytarun
Dahir	9	Safad	Nabatiya
Sa'b	15	Nahariya	Bint Jubayl
'Alayyan	10	Nahariya	Bayada
Faqih	25	Nahariya	al-Khayam
Shibli	10	Nahariya	'Ayta al-Sha'b
Sheikh	16	Ma'a lot	'Aytarun
Tubih	1	Kiryat Shmona	Kafr Kila
	Total 93 persons		

Shi'ite Preaching in the Galilee

In recent years there arose in the Galilee a Shi'ite Islam missionary movement (tashayu') among the young. Most prominent in this is a group of youngsters from the village of Daburiyya in Marj Ibn 'Amer, most of whom are members of the faith who had converted from the Sunni to the Shi'ite trend, but the range of their activities is still limited. This process began there after one of the young men travelled abroad, apparently to Australia, and met a group of Shi'ites, tashayu', and undertook to set up a Shi'ite missionary movement in his village. In addition to this, another student from the village of Daburiyya who had studied at al-Najah University in Nablus, was influenced by a group of young men in the West Bank who had accepted Shi'ite Islam. On his return to his village, he began to collect around him a group of youngsters numbering at first a few score, who accepted Shi'ite Islam, set up for themselves a

Husayniyya (a religious Shi'ite centre that resembles a mosque but without a minaret), and used to observe the ceremonies of 'Ashura Day (mentioned above).

In an interview with one of these young Shi'ites from the village of Daburiyya that was published in December 2004 in the weekly paper *Kul al-Arab*[16] that appears in Nazareth, he declared that he adopted Shi'a Islam during the period of his studies at al-Najah University in Nablus.

In answer to the questions that were posed to him whether his conversion to Shi'ism was by his own free will and if any change had occurred within him after accepting the Shi'ite religion, he made it clear that he converted freely, and that after he had studied the secrets of the Shi'ite religion in depth, he had become more tolerant in religion and abandoned his earlier fanatical approach.

In answer to another question of the *Kul al-Arab* correspondent as to whether Shi'ites in Daburiyya observed Shi'ite religious ceremonies, the young man replied that they did and noted that the religious ceremonies were held in the Husayniyya building which had been built for that purpose, especially the ceremony of condolences for the murder of Husayn Ibn Ali during the first ten days of Muharram (before the day of 'Ashura on the tenth of Muharram). He added that they conducted the prayers in the Husayniyya building[17] and sometimes outside the village, because of the attacks and provocations against them by the local residents. The young man noted also that they had many Shi'ite religious books that they had obtained from abroad, most of which had been published in Iran and Lebanon, and that were unobtainable in Israel. According to him, the Shi'ite library in Daburiyya was still at the stage of being built.

As for the other activities that are being conducted in the Shi'ite community in Daburiyya, he noted that they had set up an Internet website with the address: www.thu-alfiqar.com that was still in its early stages of preparation. The opening page of the website contains pictures of the mosque and the names of the Prophet Muhammad, Ali, Hasan and Husayn, and the name of the sword of Ali, Dhu al-Faqar (which is used as the name for the website). These names are symbols of great importance for Shi'ites. The Shi'ite community in Daburiyya has also set up an association called 'al-Jam'iyya al-Ja'fariyya' (named after the Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq d.765). He said that they did not conduct any

16 See the article by Sa'id Adawi, 'Interview with one of the founders of the sect in Daburiyya Village', in the newspaper *Kul al-Arab* [Nazareth], 10 December 2004.

17 The Husayniyya is a large hall built by Shi'ites in their village centres mainly for the purpose of conducting the ceremonies of the 'Ashura. For further details on the Husayniyya, see Sindawi (2005: 171–172).

missionary activities in the country or outside it. As for the government policy towards them, the young man being interviewed said:

> Government officials took special interest in our motives for accepting the Shi'ite religion, and many of us were called in to be questioned by the various security branches in order to make sure that we had no ties with any hostile Shi'ite organisations abroad such as Iranian organisations or Hizbullah.

At the end of the interview, the young man noted that the Shi'ite movement in Daburiyya was simply a religious movement and no more, and sought peace, but in spite of this the 'residents of the village and Sunni religious circles were harassing them more than the government authorities'.

According to the report of the Central Bureau of Statistics of 2005, the number of Shi'ites in Israel came to 600, but that same report notes that the number of Shi'ites in Israel is not certain because many of the Shi'ites observe their ceremonies in secret and their numbers are probably much larger.

The Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Siyasa* of 23 December 2003[18] quotes the website of Channel 7 that relies on high-level security sources in Israel. It notes that the number of Shi'ites in Israel is ten times larger than that recorded by the Central Bureau of Statistics, especially after hundreds of Israeli Arabs accepted the Shi'ite religion as a result of their declining political and social conditions, and that from their point of view, the acceptance of Shi'ism gives them a suitable solution and response to all their problems.

In that same report it was said that the Shi'ites in Israel have been observing their religious activities in order to draw more citizens into accepting the Shi'ite religion. According to the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Siyasa*, there were a considerable number of supporters in the Islamic movement in Israel belonging to the northern and southern factions that had accepted Shi'a Islam in recent years. They come from Kafr Kana, Nazareth, Shafa'amr, Majd al-Krum and from the region of the Triangle and the Negev, and they observe their religious ceremonies in secret and with regularity. Among the dominant Shi'ite figures is Sheikh 'Abd al-Rafi' Mahajna, Sheikh Lu'ay Dawud and Sheikh Muhammad Zahalqa.

In the same article it was said that there are Shi'ite groups that act openly and receive assistance from the government such as 'Jama'at Abna 'Abd al-Rafi' (the Bani 'Abd al-Rafi' group) that appealed to the Supreme Court in July 2006 against the Government of Israel to be granted a permit

18 http://corp.gulfinthemedia.com/gulf_media/view_article_ar_print.php?id=465263&action=save

that would allow them to go on a pilgrimage to the holy Shi'ite cities in Iran and Iraq such as Qumm, Najaf, and Karbala, but that their request was denied for security reasons.[19]

There are also a number of Shi'ite groups such as 'Jam'iyyat al-Shi'a al-Haqiqiyyin' (Association of True Shi'ites) that are active in the Triangle, distribute posters by means of electronic mail, and conduct activities in secret. The name of this group reached headlines after it distributed a poster on the Internet in which it requested the government recognise the Shi'ites as a religious minority, and in the same poster it noted that one should refrain from mixing politics with religion, and that the Americans in Iraq gave the Shi'ites much help and made it possible for them to come to power. In that same poster it was noted that there is no text in Shi'ite religious literature that calls for hostility against the Jews, the West and the United States, and therefore we ask the state of Israel to recognise the Shi'ites as a religious minority and to put this designation in identity cards.[20]

It is interesting that the Association of True Shi'ites distributed a proclamation in December 2003 calling for its supporters to refrain from cooperating with Sunni Muslims and to avoid any ties with the leaders of the Islamic Movement in the West Bank, i.e. those of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, because they do not sanctify the figure of Ali Ibn Abu Taleb and do not recognise the responsibility of the Sunni Muslims for the wrongdoings and tragedies they caused the Shi'ites in the course of history. It should be noted that this proclamation aroused much reaction in the Triangle area.

Besides the Association of True Shi'ites, there are other Shi'ite organisations active in Israel that work in secret and distribute posters to their supporters through electronic mail. Among these organisations one may include 'al-Shi'a al-Abrar' (the Good Shi'ites), 'Abna'a al-Husayn' (Sons of Husayn), 'al-Shi'a fi al-Qalb' (the Shi'a in the Heart). One can also indicate a number of Sunni Islam groups in the town of Umm al-Fahm, some of whose members declare themselves to be Shi'ites. Among these groups one may include 'Jama'at al-Amr', 'Jama'at al-Khayr', and 'Jama'at al-Islam' etc.[21]

It is worth noting that there is a similar phenomenon in the West Bank. The Islamic Jihad organisation also promotes Shi'ite ties, and in March 2006, Muhammad Ghawanima, also called Abu al-'Abd, a resident of the refugee camp al-Jalazun near Ramallah, announced the establishment of a Higher Shi'ite Council in Palestine. According to

19 I tried to find the details of this appeal to the Supreme Court but without success in spite of the great effort invested, and it may safely be assumed that the decision was not publicised for security reasons.

20 http://www.bsinjo.com/archive/index.php

21 http://www.bsinjo.com/archive/index.php?=

him, he had accepted Shi'ism ever since the successful revolution of Shi'ite Islam in Iran in 1979, and has held this belief in secret. It was only in 1995 that he revealed this while he was serving as the assistant of the General Secretary of Islamic Jihad, Fathi Shiqaqi, who was killed in that year, apparently by the Israeli Mossad. In announcing the establishment of this Council, Ghawanima noted that this body is the continuation of the Iranian Islamic project that was mentioned by Ramadan Shalah, the leader of Islamic Jihad who succeeded Shiqaqi in Damascus in 1998. Ghawanima came out publicly against the al-Qaeda organisation because of its attacks on Shi'ite mosques in Iraq. In the opinion of two Palestinian experts (Dr Riad 'Abd al-Karim of al-Najah University in Nablus and another researcher who prefers to remain anonymous), the activities of Ghawanima are the result of personal and economic interests with the aim of obtaining financial assistance from Iran. But Ghawanima denies any institutional or organisational connections with Iran or with Islamic Jihad. He makes it clear that he accepted Shi'ite Islam through the influence of Shi'ite Lebanese prisoners with whom he was imprisoned in Israeli jails for more than 20 years. In another interview with him (March 2006) by the newspaper *al-Sharq al-Awsat* that appears in London, he states that there are scores of Shi'ites in the West Bank, and adds that he intends to call upon the Shi'ites to moderate the lashings they give themselves during the ceremonies of the 'Ashura Day.[22]

Another development recently occurred in Jordan where some youngsters accepted Shi'ite Islam, and Iran sent a formal request to the Jordanian government to allow them to build a Shi'ite mosque in Amman, but the permit has not yet been given.[23]

A further development that should be noted is the sympathy shown by certain circles in the Muslim population in Israel towards the leader of

22 For details, see the article by 'Ali al-Salih in the newspaper *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 5 March 2006, No. 9959. The article can be found in the Internet website of the newspaper: http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details

It can also be found in other websites such as: http://www.sahab.net/sahab/showthread.php?threadid=332258
http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news.php?go=show&id=39225
http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/03/03/21622.html

23 On the young Shi'ites in Jordan, see for example the article by 'Omar 'Ayasira in the newspaper *Majlat al-'Asar*, 6 October 2006. The article appears in the Internet website: http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=8280

See also the article by Tariq Dilwani in the newspaper *al-'Arabiya*, 4 December 2005. The article appears in the Internet website: http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2005/12/04/19194.html

See also the article by Muhammad Abu Rumman in the newspaper *al-Islam al-Yawm*, 10 August 2006. The article appears in the Internet website: http://www.islamtoday.net/albasheer/show_articles_content.cfm?id=72&catid=79&artid=8005

Hizbullah, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, even after the recent war in Lebanon during the months of June-August 2006. Two Muslim Imams in the Galilee announced their acceptance of Shi'ite Islam – the Imam in al-Bi'na village in the Galilee and the Imam of the al-Jazar mosque in Acre, but at a later stage they withdrew their announcement. It is still early to assess whether we can expect a wave of acceptance for Shi'ite Islam, an increasing 'tashayu' ', but there are no signs of this in the meantime.

Conclusion

If we ignore the estimates of security officials in Israel – as quoted in the Kuwaiti *al-Siyasa* newspaper – on the number of 'undercover' Shi'ites, most of whom live in the Triangle area, and for whom we have no statistical information, it may be said that there is a small number of Shi'ite Muslims belonging to the Imami trend living in the State of Israel comprising approximately between 300–400 persons, including the group of youngsters in Daburiyya, and the SLA Shi'ites living in the Galilee. But the main presence of Shi'ites today are the remnants of the Shi'ite families who had lived in the country before the establishment of the State. Some of these families continued to live within the borders of the State of Israel and are living in the region of the Galilee, mainly in Nazareth and Haifa. They are aware that their Shi'ite origins are in south Lebanon and know very well what is their 'mother settlement'. Some of them have relatives living in south Lebanon, but they do not conduct a Shi'ite way of life, and the religious people among them follow a Sunni way of life in every respect. They do not prostrate on the piece of earth taken from the earth of Karbala 'turba/ the sacred earth of Karbala', as Shi'ites throughout the world are accustomed to do. They pray five times a day and not three times as is the practice among the Shi'a, and they do not hold temporary marriage as is customary among some Shi'a. They do not have Shi'ite symbols in their homes such as pictures of 'Ali or Husayn, or a picture of the sword of 'Ali 'Dhu al-Faqar' except for a few Shi'ite books that they received as a legacy from their forefathers.

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